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# **Evaluation of the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information Project 511 Tourism Service**

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<b>16. Abstract</b>  The purpose of this study is to provide an evaluation of the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information Project, involving the establishment of a 511 Premium Tourism Service Package. Kentucky is only the second state to offer tourism related services through its 511 Travel System, placing the state in a position to offer insights gained from the project to other states considering the implementation of a similar program. Lessons learned from Kentucky's experience with launching and managing a multi-county tourism information system will be invaluable. To that end, this study (1) reviewed the activities undertaken during launch and early operations of the Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service, and (2) conducted a survey of users in an effort to gauge public use and receptiveness to this service. This report offers lessons learned during the start-up phase of the project pertaining to (1) institutional issues, (2) technical issues, and (3) public-private partnership issues. In addition, a survey was administered to 600 users of the 511 Tourism Service, in an effort to gauge current public sentiment about the service as well as discover additional features users would like the service to offer in the future.			
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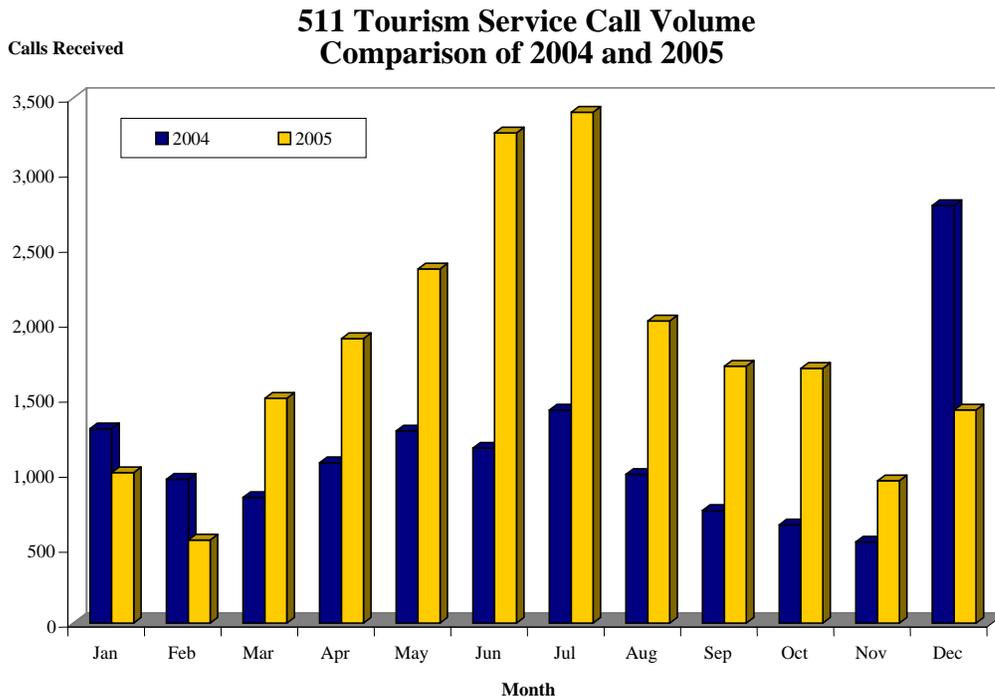
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During Fiscal Year 2002, a FHWA ITS Integration Program earmark for the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information project made funds available for the expansion of the Kentucky 511 Traffic and Travel Information System for the inclusion of tourism information services in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. Members of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, the Center for Rural Development and the Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association (SEKTDA) formed a project team to implement the new program.

In July 2003, a request for proposals was released and Sensure was selected as the private-sector contractor for the project. By November 2003, the 511 Tourism Service call center became operational and the first call was placed on December 3, 2003.

During the first year of operations in 2004, a total of 13,737 calls were made to the 511 Tourism Service. In 2005, the 511 Tourism Service received 21,769 calls, a 58% increase over the previous year. The most dramatic increases in call volumes occurred during peak tourist season, where call made in May 2005 increased 84% as compared to May 2004. June 2005 saw a 180% increase over the number of calls received for June 2004. The figure below provides a comparison between call volumes in 2004 to those in 2005.



The purpose of this study is to provide an evaluation of the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information Project, involving the establishment of a 511 Premium Service Package. Kentucky is only the second state to offer tourism and travel-related services through its 511 information system, placing it in a position to offer insights and lessons learned gained from the project to other states considering implementing a similar program. This study (1) reviewed the activities

undertaken to launch the Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service, and (2) conducted a survey of site users in an effort to gauge public use and receptiveness to this service. Through interviews with several key players involved in the implementation process, we were able to derive several best practices and lessons learned that will provide valuable information both to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and other states considering expanding their existing 511 service to include tourism information services.

## **Lessons Learned**

This report offers lessons learned during the start-up phase of the project pertaining to (1) institutional issues, (2) technical issues, and (3) public-private partnership issues. The section on institutional issues discusses the issues faced by the project team in order to meet the strict deadlines and short timeframes of the project. The section concerning the technical issues faced by the project team discusses issues such as data collection, data quality, operator training and response, ease of use of the 511 system, and marketing strategies. The last section of lessons learned involves issues surrounding public-private partnerships. These three categories provide a comprehensive perspective of the various issues faced by the 511 Tourism service project team. The following summarizes the various lessons learned during the launch and early operations of the project.

### *Institutional Issues:*

- I1: Strict Deadlines and Short Time Frames

### *Technical Issues:*

- T1: Collecting the Data
  - Need Part-Time workers and Full-Time Commitment
  - Organization of Information
- T2: Ensuring Data Quality
  - What is Quality Data?
  - Compare Articulation Levels
  - Data Verification
- T3: Operator Training
  - Comprehensive Training Program
  - Onsite Visits to Tourism Properties/Attractions
- T4: Ensuring the Quality of Operator Responses to Tourism Requests
  - Develop Definitions of a Good 511 Tourism Service Call
  - Quality Control Measures-Listen to the Calls
  - Develop and Use a Procedure Manual
- T5: Make it Easy to Reach the 511 Tourism Operator
  - Simplify the Call Menu Option
  - Make the Tourism Service a Prominent Option
- T6: Effective Marketing
  - Hit Users While they are Driving
  - Repeat the Same Message

*Public Private Partnership Issues:*

- PPP1: When Do You Need a Partner?
  - Lack Organizational Capabilities
  - External Assistance
- PPP2: How Do You Decide on the Right Partner?
  - A Single Partner
  - Partner Location
  - Partner Engagement
  - Partner Capabilities
- PPP3: Ensuring Good Relationships
  - Single Point of Contact with Authority to Make Decisions
  - Flexible Organizational Structure
  - Everyone on the Same Page

**511 User Survey**

In addition to interviews, a telephone survey was administered by the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute (USI) in an effort to collect different types of information integral to the future of the 511 Tourism Service and to overall tourism within the Southern and Eastern Kentucky region. USI conducted 600 interviews with users of the 511 tourism option, asking a range of questions including users experiences with the 511 tourism option and the services they would like the 511 Tourism Service to offer in the future. The survey found high levels of satisfaction with the current 511 Tourism service and well as high levels of support for the expansion of the 511 Tourism service to other tourism related areas both within the current service area and to areas outside the current service area.

## Chapter 1

### BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

This study provides an evaluation of the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Project involving the establishment of a 511 Premium Service Package comprising of tourism information services. This report reviews the activities undertaken to launch the Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service, summarizes the lessons learned from the implementation process, and identifies best practices and recommendations resulting from these activities. This documentation of launch activities, lessons learned, and best practices and recommendations will provide valuable information for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet when faced with future system enhancements or improvements. It will also be of use to other states that are considering adding Premium Services, especially tourism information services, to their existing 511 Service.

#### **1.1 Background: The Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information Project and the 511 Tourism Service**

A Fiscal Year 2002 FHWA ITS Integration Program earmark for the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information Project made available funds for expansion of the Kentucky 511 Traffic and Travel Information System to include the implementation of a Premium Service Package that provided regional tourism information for Southern and Eastern Kentucky. At the time, the existing 511 system provided traffic, construction, and weather information for Kentucky travelers. The proposed Premium Service Package would provide travelers with tourism information such as special events, local points of interest, and concierge services for hotel and restaurant reservations. The Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service, developed and managed by the Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association (SEKTDA) with its private-sector partner, Senture, was integrated into the Kentucky 511 system's infrastructure and launched in December 2003. With this Premium Service in place, Kentucky became the second state in the country to offer tourism information, in addition to basic traffic and travel information, through its 511 system.

Virginia was the first state to provide optional tourism and travel-related services through its 511 system. This tourism information service provided information on lodging, restaurants, and 'things to do' in the 35 county coverage area along Interstate 81. By contrast, Kentucky's tourism information service encompasses over 46 counties in the southern and eastern parts of the state. With only two states currently providing 511 tourism information services, and other states considering implementing a similar premium service package, lessons learned from Kentucky's experience with launching and managing a multi-county tourism information system will be invaluable.

Kentucky is in a good position, as an early adopter and 511 system leader, to share the knowledge and expertise it has developed through the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway

Information Project with other states interested in enhancing their existing 511 systems.

## **1.2 Structure of Report**

This report begins with an analysis of the key aspects involved in the implementation of the Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service. It documents the critical action steps taken throughout the process and discusses lessons learned related to technical and institutional issues. The primary critical success factor for this project was the public-private partnership between SEKTDA and Senture. As such, the report also identifies and addresses those issues necessary to ensure a successful public-private partnership. These lessons learned are summarized in Chapter 3.

A telephone survey of 600 users of the 511 Tourism Service was also conducted to better understand their utilization of the service and gauge their satisfaction with the system, the information, and the customer service it provides. The survey, completed in March 2006 was also intended to obtain information concerning user preferences for enhanced services. Information gleaned from this voluntary telephone survey was also useful in determining possible (and potential) impact of the 511 Tourism Service. The full survey instrument is included in this report as Appendix B. Detailed survey findings are discussed in Chapter 4.

This report also includes cost information relating to the implementation and launch of the Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service. This information, provided by SEKTDA and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, is presented in Appendix D.

Chapter 2 discusses several issues currently faced by SEKTDA and Senture as they further develop and strengthen the 511 Tourism Service. The primary concerns were twofold: (1) marketing the service to build consumer awareness and (2) building a self-sufficient system. At the present time, SEKTDA and Senture appear to have addressed the initial concerns of marketing its program to potential customers outside its service area. The problem of self-sufficiency, however, remains largely unresolved.

Chapter 5 concludes this report by highlighting critical success factors for implementation and launch and a brief summary of survey findings such as the utilization of and satisfaction with the service.

## Chapter 2

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, LAUNCH, AND EARLY OPERATIONS

This chapter reviews the implementation, launch, and early operation phases of the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information Project's 511 Tourism Service. It describes the action items, tasks, decisions, and actors involved in each phase and identifies the important "lessons learned" as they occurred during each phase.

#### 2.1 Implementation and Launch

The first important decision faced by the project team was locating the call center. The original intent was to have the 511 Tourism Service call center at the Center for Rural Development in Somerset, Kentucky. The Center for Rural Development had a room in its facility that could be soundproofed and turned into the call center. However, the project team determined that this site was (1) too small and (2) too noisy. The first option, therefore, was not a feasible location. A second potential site for the tourism call center was identified in the Center for Rural Development's new Senior Citizens Center facility. A portion of this facility could be used for the call center, which would avoid the problems associated with the first location. The project team determined that this location would meet the requirements for a call center and began acquiring the necessary equipment and operators. After several months, the 511 Tourism Service project team determined that this location would not be ideally suited for their needs. Significant resources (financial and time) were necessary to equip the facility for its call center activities. In addition, there was not sufficient technical expertise in the Somerset area to set-up, operate, and maintain a call center. Given the lack of technical expertise and the necessary commitment of resources, the project team determined that contracting out the call center work to a private partner would be the best option. The decision was made for SEKTDA to bid out the call center development and operation to a single outside contractor. At a minimum, this private partner would need to have the necessary infrastructure, equipment, and technical expertise.

The request for proposals was released in July 2003. Four potential bidders attended the pre-bid conference and two bids were actually received – one from CastleRock and one from Senture. The Selection Review Committee, comprised of SEKTDA and Center for Rural Development staff, selected Senture as the private-sector contractor for the project.

### **Deciding on a Private-Sector Partner**

#### PPP1: When Do You Need a Partner?

- Lack Organizational Capabilities.** Though SEKTDA initially attempted to implement a call center in their location, they quickly realized that they did not have the technical staff needed for a working call center. As a tourist promotion group, SEKTDA could provide excellent tourism information, but they did not have the technical assets or capabilities of provide that information to the numerous users that would be using the 511 Tourism Service.
- External Assistance.** SEKTDA and the Center for Rural Development quickly realized that the technical skills they needed could not be found in Somerset, Kentucky. Therefore, they needed to find a partner from outside the initial planned (legislated) area.

#### PPP2: How Do You Decide on the Right Partner?

- A Single Partner.** SEKTDA knew it needed one partner that would be capable of handling all aspects of the call center operations. Given the complexity of the project and the short time frame for project completion, multiple partners could introduce coordination challenges and possibly add to the cost of the project.
- Partner Location.** The original legislation specified that the call center be located in Somerset, Kentucky. Given that this could not be feasibly accomplished, the next best solution was to locate the call center in Senture's facility, less than 50 miles from the original location. The close proximity of Senture's operations to SEKTDA and Senture's location within the service area contributed to its selection as the private sector partner. Close proximity allowed for closer supervision by SEKTDA and face-to-face relations between SEKTDA and Senture's upper management.
- Partner Engagement.** Senture was located in the 511 Premium Service coverage area which gave it more of a stake in ensuring the program's success. As Senture's leadership stated, "we love doing it ... we work here, live here, and this is our area."
- Partner Capabilities.** At bid time, Senture already had an operating call center. This was evidence of its expertise in and knowledge of the call center industry, reassuring SEKTDA that it was capable of getting the job done in the time allotted.

At the same time locational considerations were being reviewed, SEKTDA was already involved in the data collection phase of the project. As the local tourism promotion organization, SEKTDA already had information about tourism-related properties in its service area. However, when SEKTDA staff reviewed the information already in its system, they determined that (1) the information was deficient; and (2) more in-depth data collection would be required. The project team determined that the data collection activities required should be

undertaken in-house, since SEKTDA had both the connections and the expertise to develop the tourism database that would underpin the 511 Premium Service Package.

### **Building the Database**

#### T1: Collecting the Data

- Need Part-Time Workers and Full-Time Commitment.** Most of SEKTDA's data collection relied on volunteers during the initial data collection phase of the project. Relying on volunteers for the data collection process took longer and initially was less consistent than it would have been if there had been full-time staff responsible. If having a full time commitment is not feasible, then consideration should be given to contracting the data collection process out to another entity.
- Organization of information.** Information was organized by county and tourism category, making the collection, verification and data entry processes more manageable.

#### T2: Ensuring Data Quality

- What is quality data?** If feasible, the research team should determine the characteristics of high quality data before data collection has begun. Though this was not the case for the 511 Tourism Service project team in the beginning, they were able to determine what quality data would be as the project progresses. Some characteristics of quality data include: (1) properties or attractions are consistently described or articulated; (2) operational information such as operating hours, rates, etc. are accurate; and (3) contact information are up-to-date.
- Compare articulation levels.** Once the data has been collected, the articulation levels should be compared to ensure consistency. One approach to comparing the articulation levels involves comparison (1) between different properties by the same data collector; and (2) for the same property but by different data collectors. However, one way to ensure properties are consistently articulated is to use a standardized reporting format that guides the data collection process and shapes the description of the properties/attractions.
- Data Verification.** The project team placed high importance on verifying the accuracy of database information. Volunteers from corridor teams, tourism commissions and chambers of commerce were involved in the verification phase of the process. Once the 511 Tourism Information Call Center was operational, call center operators contacted property owners to verify the information. Verifying the information ensured that operators were providing the most accurate information to 511Tourism Service users.

The overall data collection and compilation process lasted approximately 18 months. It took a lot of trial and error and experimenting with several collection methods before a satisfactory system was developed. At first, SEKTDA hired temporary part-time workers to collect data and research tourism-related attractions and properties, and then to input it into the database. After the first wave of data collection was completed, SEKTDA staff reviewed the information in the database. They found that articulation levels for the researched properties or attractions were very low, and concluded that the data collection would need to be repeated. The second time around they supplemented the collected information (those collected by the temporary workers) with that obtained from corridor teams, tourism commissions and local chambers of commerce. In addition, information verification was performed by corridor teams. Each corridor team was given a standardized verification form to fill-out. Because the corridor teams, tourism commissions and chambers of commerce involved volunteers, there was a long lag between SEKTDA's sending out the verification form and receiving the return information from the volunteers.

Even while contractual details between Senture and SEKTDA (via the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet) were being finalized, Senture began working with SEKTDA to polish the data, migrate it over to the database, develop the website, and other necessary action items to get the call center running and the 511 Tourism Service deployed. Many technical details (such as call center technical requirements and data management) remained to be worked out before the tourism call center could begin operations. However, one of the advantages of partnering with Senture was that it already had an operational call center and the needed amenities in place. Senture also dedicated one staff member, Stephanie Fouts, as its 511 Tourism Service project manager, and provided her with the necessary resources for the project's implementation. Ms. Fouts developed a project plan that was communicated both internally to Senture's technical team and to SEKTDA. Given the strict deadline and short timeframe for implementation, having the project plan and a single contact person greatly facilitated the coordination between SEKTDA and Senture.

### **Working with a Deadline**

#### **II: Strict Deadlines and Short Timeframes**

- Creating Project Plans and Meeting Deadlines.** SEKTDA and Senture had a very short timeframe to work with from the time the RFP was announced in July 2003 to the pre-determined first call date of December 8 that same year. Given that there was less than 5 months to deploy the project, project team members needed a project plan that was based on meeting the final deadline. The combination of the project plan and the strict deadline was beneficial because it eliminated vision or scope creep during the initial deployment phase of the project.

When SEKTDA turned over the website development to Senture, it already had a prototype website. However, Senture quickly found that this website could not be migrated. The prototype website was comprised of static pages for each property/attraction. A more dynamic website was needed, both for the ease of updating website information and accessing information. From the website development perspective, data was not the biggest challenge. The visual aspects of the website, including pictures of the properties or attractions, posed the major challenges.

During the website development phase, the project team realized that a single general website would not be feasible given the user demand for the site. There were two audiences for the website: (1) the public and (2) the 511 Tourism Service operators. Both user groups had different informational needs. The call center operators needed to access information more quickly and needed more detailed information than was necessary for other website users. In addition, the operators needed to be able to access the information in multiple formats, which may be confusing for the average website visitor. This called for a revision of the approach taken to data presentation and management.

Several issues arose when the SEKTDA-Senture project team tackled the data management aspect of the project. The most pressing issue was data categorization. Part of the issue was that the categorization system had not been properly described to Senture's technical staff. As a result, at the beginning of the process, Senture did not have a solid understanding of the category development approach. Categorization of the data was critical for the operators to quickly and easily find the relevant tourism information for the caller. The operators needed to be able to find the tourism attractions/properties within the caller's search area that met his/her interests (such as horseback riding, antiques, etc.). The categorization problems were addressed and the database the operators currently use was developed.

Getting the tourism call center operational involved more than just equipment and database development. The human aspects were just as critical, since the call center would utilize live operators. The decision to use live operators was an important one, as the research team later discovered. Since the project's launch, many users of the 511 Tourism Service have expressed their preference for talking to an actual person. It was important that the call center operators be properly trained and well-versed in Southern and Eastern Kentucky tourism. Senture already had an operator training process developed for its regular call center operations, and needed only to supplement this training program with a tourism-specific component. This was achieved through on-site training at some of the attractions/properties included in the tourism database. Call center operators physically visited these properties to learn about their specific offerings and about overall tourism in the area. On-site visits helped operators get excited about the properties/attractions they would be promoting, while also serving to generate enthusiasm among property owners about being included in the 511 Tourism Service database. This approach served a dual purpose of both training the operators about local tourism and providing outreach for the overall 511 Tourism Service.

SEKTDA staff also visited the operators at the call center and talked to them about the 511 Tourism Service. This ensured that operators were knowledgeable not only of the properties/attractions but also of the region's overall tourism program. In addition, Sensure provided hands-on training for its operators, ensuring that they were able to efficiently access the tourism database. The goal of the overall training program – on-site training at tourism properties/attractions, SEKTDA training on the 511 Tourism Service, and Sensure's hands-on training for accessing information on the database – ensured that operators were able to provide callers with accurate and relevant tourism information, in a professional manner and with enthusiasm for promoting local tourism.

### **511 Tourism Operators**

#### **T3: Operator Training**

- Comprehensive Training Program.** The project team realized that standard operator training programs would not be the most beneficial option for training 511 Tourism operators. Team leaders realized that in addition to training operators to use the equipment and access relevant information, operators would also be serving as tourism ambassadors for the communities in the service area. Therefore, operators needed to be knowledgeable about both the properties/attractions and the overall tourism in the region. They needed to be enthusiastic in promoting local tourism. A good training program would encompass all these aspects.
- On-site Visits to Tourism Properties/Attractions.** 511 Tourism Service operators were required to visit area attractions so they were not simply regurgitating information to callers. Having visited the area attractions and services the operators were able to speak from experience.

Another important phase of the deployment process concerned advertising and marketing for the 511 Tourism Service. Since the tourism aspect of the 511 Service was entirely new, the project team needed to inform the public about its availability. Funds were allocated to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to update or replace 511 roadside signs throughout the service area with information about the 511 Tourism Service. In addition, SEKTDA used radio and television advertising to inform the public of the availability of the new tourism service. Rack cards and 511 brochures were distributed in two regions within SEKTDA's area. Both SEKTDA and Sensure were involved in the advertising and marketing efforts for the program. Sensure even committed some of its monetary resources to support marketing activities for the 511 Tourism Service launch.

In November 2003, the 511 Tourism Service call center became operational. By mid-November the tourism option was set-up as a hidden menu option on the Kentucky 511 Traffic and Travel System. Finally, on December 3, the 511 Tourism Service was placed on-line as a Premium Service Package on Kentucky's 511 system. Congressman Hal Rogers made the first official call to the 511 Tourism Service on December 8, 2003.

### **Effective Public-Private Partnering**

#### PPP3: Ensuring Good Relationships

- Single Point of Contact with Authority to Make Decisions.** Senture assigned one staff person as the project manager and contact person with SEKTDA. This dedicated staff person was provided with the necessary resources and authority to make project-specific decisions. Providing a partnership structure where there was a direct contact ensured that decisions could be made quickly and issues addressed promptly.
- Flexible Organizational Structure.** SEKTDA's organizational structure was very flexible because it had such a small staff and each staff member had multiple responsibilities. Senture also had a flexible organizational structure. This flexibility was especially important for certain aspects of the project, like the deployment of the 511 Tourism Service, where there was a high degree of uncertainty.
- Everyone on the Same Page.** For the 511 Tourism Service project it was critical that all parties be on the same page. SEKTDA's tourism activities fed into the data management and call center activities undertaken by Senture. Discontinuity or disparity between those activities could have led to important delays in the deployment process. To ensure continuity and consistency, SEKTDA and Senture had weekly and monthly update meetings.

## **2.2 Early Operations**

Following the successful on-time launch of the 511 Tourism Service, the Senture-SEKTDA project team continued to improve and update the service. Significant effort went into ensuring the quality of the tourism information provided by the 511 Tourism Service operators. Internally, Senture staff performed quality control on all calls received through the 511 Tourism Service, while SEKTDA's 511 Coordinator, Karen Back, listened to 100% of calls to ensure that they met expectations. A call monitoring report was submitted to Senture each month. The percentage of calls monitored was gradually reduced as operators became more knowledgeable and the quality of calls improved. Listening to these calls provided SEKTDA with a better understanding of what users were looking for when they used the 511 Tourism Service, while allowing SEKTDA to continually improve its tourism offerings. Senture has also used these calls to continue the education and training of call center operators. Senture's human resources and training staff continue to listen to calls to facilitate the hiring and training of new operators.

Senture also had to develop a way of grading or evaluating the tourism operators' handling of informational requests. In typical call center operations, operators would be graded on call time – how long it took to resolve the caller's problems or address the caller's issues. This approach was not applicable for 511 Tourism operators because of the variety in call lengths.

Some of the longer calls were considered higher quality calls because the operators were able to engage the caller in a dialog about travel and tourism in the area. However, some longer duration calls were problematic since the problem resulted from the inability of the operators to quickly retrieve the requested information. Some of the shorter calls were also of high quality because the caller needed specific information and the operator was able to promptly provide that information.

Given that the level of quality of a call could not be solely judged on the length of the call, Senture had to change its operator grading scheme. It did so with SEKTDA's involvement. Both organizations agreed to a definition of a good 511 Tourism Service call and this definition was used to create a tool to evaluate travel and tourism operators.

To expedite information retrieval time, the database was revised to provide operators with a variety of options for locating information. Senture's technical staff developed an advanced search tool that allowed the operator to obtain information by (1) typing in part of the property's name or title, (2) specifying the county, or (3) choosing from subcategories. This advanced search tool significantly reduced the time it took operators to access the information requested by the caller.

### **511 Tourism Operators**

T4: Ensuring the Quality of Operator Responses to Tourism Requests

- Develop Definitions of a Good 511 Tourism Service Call.** Monitoring and evaluating the quality of the 511 Tourism required that the project team first define what constituted a good call. Their specific criteria were: (1) operator provides accurate and relevant information; (2) operator engages the caller in conversation; (3) operator asks the right questions to probe the caller's interests; and (4) operator promotes area tourism. By clearly defining and providing examples of good calls, the operators knew how to provide quality service to users.
- Quality Control Measures – Listen to the Calls.** The project team listened to the phone calls received through the 511 Tourism Service. By having both parties listen to the calls, Senture team members were able to develop a better understanding of SEKTDA's team members' expectations of the calls and operator responses.
- Develop and Use a Procedure Manual.** SEKTDA and Senture realized that operator responses to calls made to the 511 Tourism Service could not be scripted because there were so many variations in the informational requests made by the caller. Though specific scripts could not be used, an overall procedure manual provided the basic expectations of how calls and requests should be treated. SEKTDA developed a procedure manual which defined the criteria for each category and requirements for data entry fields. Senture's staff included sections which addressed rules for handling calls and call tracking.

Another issue has been the state's 511 Traffic and Travel call option menu and voice recognition system. Many callers to the 511 Tourism Service mentioned difficulties with navigating the numerous optional layers necessary to reach a tourism operator. Senture and SEKTDA team members also felt that the menu option was not very easy for callers to navigate, thus causing a long lag between dialing 5-1-1 and actually reaching an operator. The option also seemed to confuse callers and despite knowing that they wanted "tourism information" the callers did not know how to navigate the menu to reach the tourism component of the 511 Traffic and Travel service. To many of the tourism information users, the 511 Tourism Service was similar to "instant gratification" in that when they wanted tourism information, they wanted it immediately! As such, they became frustrated with menu options that were too cumbersome, and gave up before they reached a tourism operator. With the cooperation of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, which manages the statewide 511 Traffic and Travel Service, the overall menu options were modified to make the tourism option more accessible.

### **511 Menu Options**

T5: Make it easy to reach the 511 Tourism operator

- Simplify the call menu option.** Many early users of the 511 Tourism Service suggested that the complicated menu (that was first implemented when the service went live) detracted from their experience and the overall effectiveness of the system. Providing a simplified menu helped alleviate the frustration associated with voice activation systems.
- Make the tourism service a prominent option.** The more layers the caller had to go through, the less likely he/she was to actually follow through with the call. By making the tourism service a prominent option, callers quickly reach a live person to discuss their travel needs.

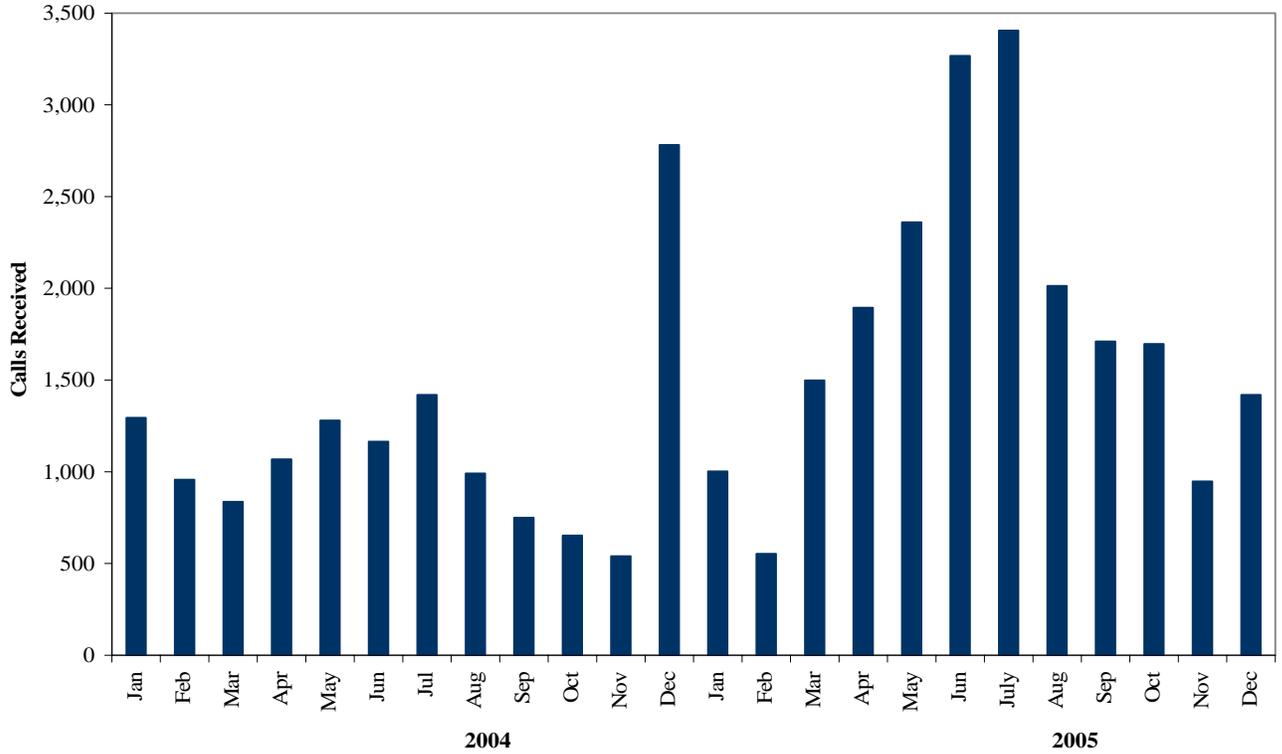
From Senture's perspective today, the 511 Tourism Service has shifted from a project-based or implementation-based toward a more operations-based one. As such, Stephanie Fouts no longer serves as the program manager, instead reverting to her pre-511 role as Senture's operations manager. With the operations-based approach, Senture is moving toward greater involvement by the 511 Tourism call center supervisory staff in program administration and management.

## **2.3 Future Concerns and Issues**

Since its launch, the 511 Tourism Service has continued to receive a large volume of calls. In January 2004, the first full month the program was operational, 1,295 calls were received by the 511 Tourism Call Center. For the 2004 year, a total of 13,737 calls were made to 511 Tourism Service. In 2005, 21,769 calls were received by the 511 Tourism Call Center. Figure 2.3.1 summarizes monthly call volume for the 24 months that the program has been in service. As of December 2005, a total of 35,506 calls have been made to the 511 Tourism

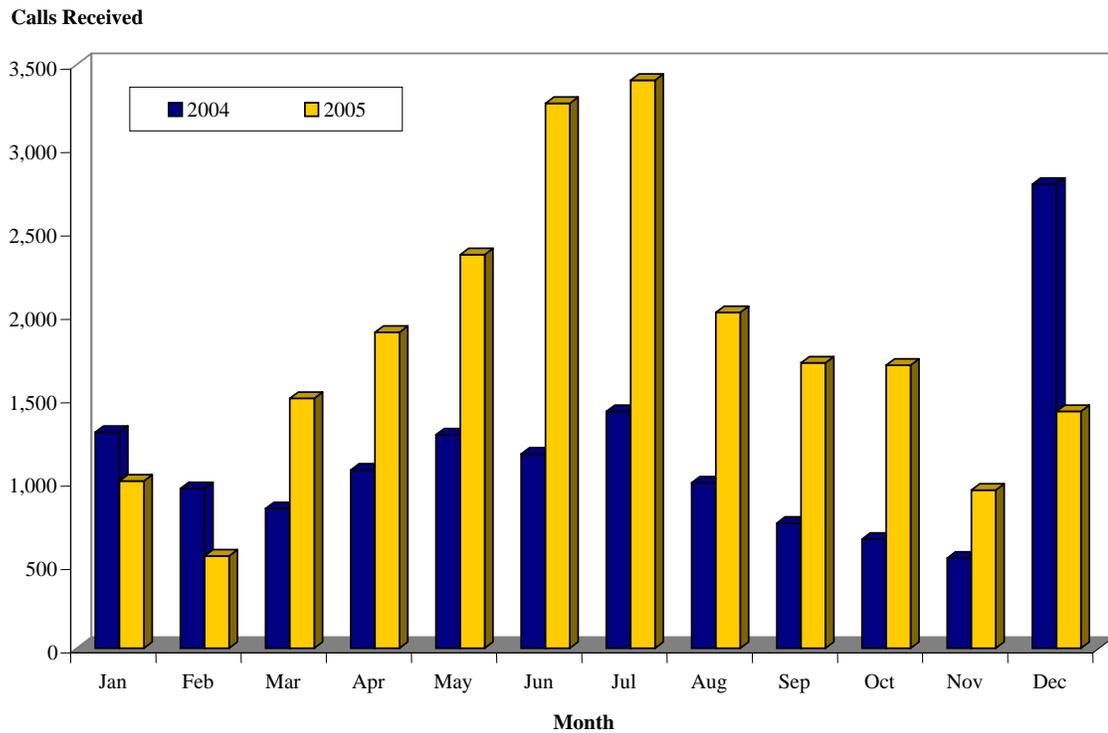
Service since its launch.

**Figure 2.3.1: Monthly Call Volume for the 511 Tourism Service**



Even more impressive is the comparison of monthly call volumes in 2004 against those in 2005. Compared to the first year of operations, call volumes increased by 58%. The average monthly call volume for 2004 and 2005 were 1,145 and 1,814 calls, respectively. The most dramatic increases in call volume were seen during the peak travel and tourism season. These increases range from 84% to 180%. In May 2005, calls to the 511 Tourism Service almost doubled (84%) those for May 2004, and in June 2005, the calls almost tripled (180%) those for June 2004. This monthly comparison is shown in Figure 2.3.2.

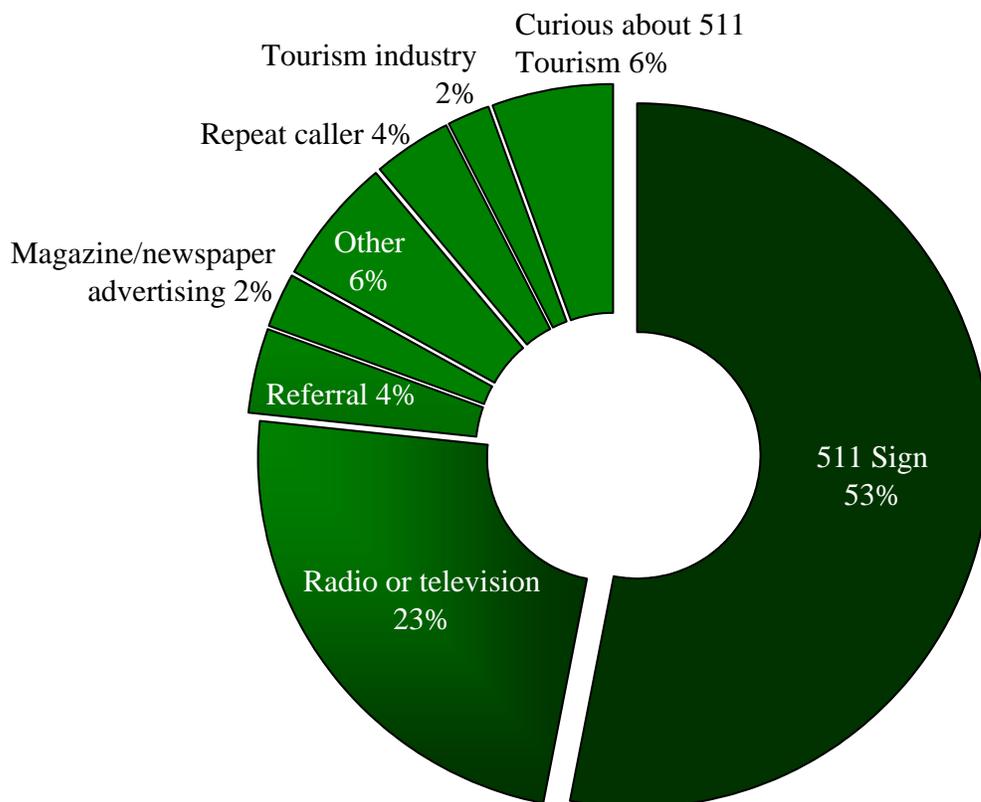
**Figure 2.3.2 Comparison of Monthly Call Volume, 2004 and 2005**



Looking ahead, SEKTDA is focusing on two major issues: (1) self-sufficiency and (2) marketing. The first is finding the means to keep the 511 Tourism Service self-sufficient. The deployment and early operations of the program were made possible by federal funding, but there is no guarantee of continued funding. Currently, SEKTDA does not charge tourist attractions/properties a fee for listing in the 511 Tourism Service database. However, one way to raise revenue would be to charge these properties an annual listing fee. It would also be possible to allow properties such as restaurants, hotels or motels to advertise on the 511 Tourism Service website and be preferred properties in the database. Also, expansion of the program outside the Southern and Eastern Kentucky region would provide an opportunity to sell advertising. However, several pre-cursor issues must be addressed before these options can be feasibly addressed. The first is acquiring permission from the FHWA to receive additive income for the program. Second, property owners must be persuaded to pay for advertising in the 511 system. To accomplish this, property owners must be shown that the 511 Tourism Service generates revenues for their property that would not be generated otherwise. Without being able to show the program's success, it would be difficult to encourage property owners to pay for the listing or to advertise. A related issue would be to track the benefits of listing or advertising. How can the benefits of listing or advertising through the 511 Tourism Service be quantified? The final issue would be that of setting-up a fee structure that would generate sufficient revenues while charging fees proportional to the benefits received.

The second issue is continued emphasis on marketing the program to the public. The deployment and early operations phases of the program only allowed for limited advertising and marketing, though by March 2005, SEKTDA had begun a fairly aggressive marketing campaign. SEKTDA began advertising the 511 service on TV and radio which described the information available through the 511 Tourism Service. Print advertisements were placed in several magazines with distribution throughout Kentucky, as well as in a Kentucky travel section insert in 50 newspapers in 4 states adjacent to Kentucky. Statistics of marketing source utilization as of June 2005 are summarized in Figure 2.3.3.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 2.3.3 Marketing Sources for 511 Tourism Service Calls**



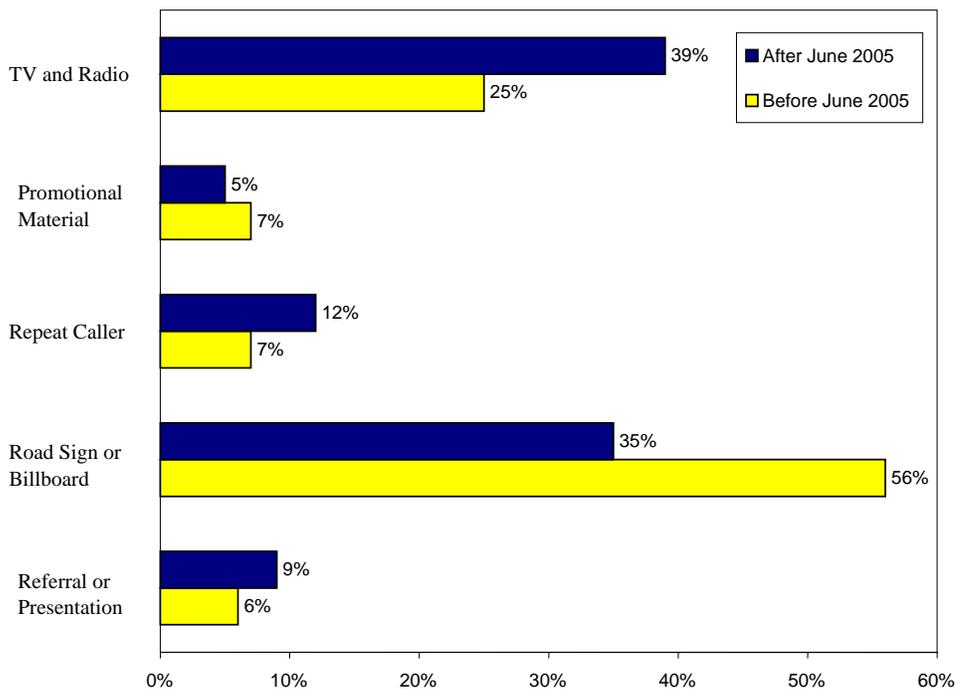
SEKTDA has continued to emphasize its marketing efforts, having realized how crucial effective marketing is for a successful program. SEKTDA has found, from caller comments, that the most effect marketing methods are TV, radio and roadside signs. In June 2005 SEKTDA implemented a new marketing approach that placed greater emphasis on television and radio commercials and continued use of high visibility marketing media such as road

<sup>1</sup> These statistics are provided for the period between January 2004 through June 2005. Later statistics, while available, could not be incorporated into the same analysis because the data collected was not comparable.

signage and billboards.

A comparison of the marketing sources cited by 511 Tourism Service callers before and after this new marketing approach was implemented is provided in Figure 2.3.4. A higher percentage of callers mentioned seeing or hearing 511 television and radio advertisements after the June 2005 (June 2005-December 2005) marketing campaign was implemented than before June 2005 (January 2005-May 2005). Another category with significant increases was from repeat callers after the implementation of the June marketing campaign. It is possible that new marketing campaign not only reached new callers, but also reminded previous users of the various services the 511 Tourism Service can provide. Billboards and road signs remained a large source of knowledge for the 511 Tourism Service, even after the new marketing campaign, suggesting that SEKTDa should continue using this media as a marketing outlet.

**Figure 2.3.4 Utilization of Marketing Media by 511 Tourism Service Callers, Comparison of Old (Before June 2005) and New (After June 2005) Marketing Approaches**



The success of this new marketing approach was evident by the tremendous increase in call volume to the 511 Tourism Service. June 2005 saw a 180% increase in call volumes from the same time the previous year and a 38% increase from the previous month. This trend in increased call volume continued for the remainder of the 2005 summer season, with call volume at least doubling from the previous year.

As previously discussed (and as shown in Figures 2.3.3 and 2.3.4), the 511 roadside signs and billboards had the greatest impact on call volume, followed by television and radio advertising. Combined, referrals and repeat callers also contribute to the growing popularity of the 511 Tourism Service program. As of December 2005, 1,563 calls to the 511 Tourism Service have been from repeat callers. While this represents only slightly over 4% of the total calls, this percentage is expected to increase as the program gains a foothold and develops a faithful group of users.

Other public awareness activities SETKDA has used as part of this new marketing approach include:

- Billboards on major highways
- Tent cards at tourist locations such as in motel rooms, restaurant tables, attractions, and businesses
- Theater program inserts at music and theater venues
- Posters on bulletin boards, windows, and walls in area businesses
- Banners displayed at events, festivals and in lobbies of state parks and major attractions
- Presentations by SETKDA staff at workshops, conferences, meetings and trainings
- Rack card/ and 511 brochure distribution in more regions in Kentucky and at various business events, festivals and attractions
- 511 stickers on folders and other items distributed by SEKTDA
- Advertisements on ATV trail maps and county maps

Appendix D contains several examples of the various marketing paraphernalia used by SEKTDA in the new marketing approach.

#### **Marketing the 511 Tourism Service**

T6: Effective Marketing

- Hit Users While they are Driving.** The 511 Tourism Service is often considered an “instant gratification” service. While driving, a person needs tourism information and wants it immediately. Marketing media that informs or reminds him/her of the 511 Tourism Service will be most effective. Roadside signs and billboards are the best marketing tools.
- Repeat the Same Message.** Have the same message on all marketing media so that the caller associates that one slogan or message with the 511 Tourism Service.

## Chapter 3

### LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE SOUTHEASTERN/EASTERN KENTUCKY 511 TOURISM SERVICE

The lessons learned from the launch and early operations of the Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service, as described in Chapter 2, emphasize three different areas: (1) institutional issues; (2) technical issues; and (3) public-private partnership issues. This chapter summarizes the lessons learned in each category.

#### 3.1 Institutional Issues

Lessons learned in this section concern institutional issues the project team faced in the initial phases of the project. The primary institutional issue they faced concerned the strict deadline for getting the project operational.

##### I1: Strict Deadlines and Short Timeframes

**Creating Project Plans and Meeting Deadlines.** SEKTDA and Senture had a very short timeframe to work with from the time the RFP was announced in July 2003 to the pre-determined first call date of December 8 that same year. Given that there was less than 5 months to deploy the project, project team members needed a project plan that was based on meeting the final deadline. The combination of the project plan and the strict deadline was beneficial because it eliminated vision or scope creep during the initial deployment phase of the project.

#### 3.2 Technical Issues

Lessons learned in this section concern the technical issues faced by the project team and how they solved these issues. Technical issues include data collection problems, operator training, 511 menu options, and marketing strategies, not just technological capability.

##### T1: Collecting the Data

**Need Part-Time workers and Full-Time Commitment.** Most of SEKTDA's data collection relied on volunteers during the initial data collection phase of the project. Relying on volunteers for the data collection process took longer and initially was less consistent than it would have been if there had been full-time staff responsible. If having a full time commitment is not feasible, then consideration should be given to contracting the data collection process out to another entity.

**Organization of Information.** Information was organized by county and tourism category, making the collection, verification and data entry processes more manageable.

## T2: Ensuring Data Quality

**What is Quality Data?** If feasible, the research team should determine the characteristics of high quality data before data collection has begun. Though this was not the case for the 511 Tourism service project team in the beginning, they were able to determine what quality data would be as the project progressed. Some characteristics of quality data include: (1) properties or attractions that were consistently described or articulated; (2) operational information such as operating hours, rates, etc. are accurate; and (3) contact information are up-to-date.

**Compare Articulation Levels.** Once the data has been collected, the articulation levels should be compared to ensure consistency. One approach to comparing the articulation levels involves comparison (1) between different properties by the same data collector; and (2) for the same property but by different data collectors. However, one way to ensure that properties are consistently articulated is to use a standardized reporting format that guides the data collection process and shapes the description of the properties/attractions.

**Data Verification.** The project team placed high importance on verifying the accuracy of database information. Volunteers from corridor teams, tourism commissions and chambers of commerce were involved in the verification phase of the process. Once the 511 Tourism Information Call Center was operational, call center operators contacted property owners to verify the property information. Verifying the information ensured that operators were providing the most accurate information to 511 Tourism users.

## T3: Operator Training

**Comprehensive Training Program.** The project team realized that standard operator training programs would not be the most beneficial option for training 511 Tourism operators. Team leaders realized that in addition to training operators to use the equipment and to access the relevant information, operators would also be serving as tourism ambassadors for communities in the service area. Therefore, operators needed to be knowledgeable about both the properties/attractions and overall tourism in the region. They needed to be enthusiastic in promoting local tourism to callers. A good training program would encompass all these aspects.

**On-site Visits to Tourism Properties or Attractions.** 511 Tourism Service operators were required to visit area attractions so they were not simply regurgitating information to callers. Having visited the area attractions and services the operators were able to speak from experience.

## T4: Ensuring the Quality of Operator Responses to Tourism Requests

**Develop Definitions of a Good 511 Tourism Service Call.** Monitoring and evaluating the quality of the 511 Tourism required that the project team first define what constituted a good call. Their specific criteria were: (1) operator provides accurate and relevant information; (2) operator engages the caller in conversation; (3) operator asks the right questions to probe the caller's interests; and (4) operator promotes area tourism. By clearly defining and providing examples of good calls, the operators knew how to provide quality service to users.

**Quality Control Measures – Listen to the Calls.** The project team listened to the phone calls received through the 511 Tourism Service. By having all parties listen to the calls, Senture team members were able to develop a better understanding of SEKTDA’s team members’ expectations of the calls and operator responses.

**Develop and Use a Procedure Manual.** SEKTDA and Senture realized that operator responses to calls made to the 511 Tourism Service could not be scripted because there were so many variations in the informational requests made by the callers. Though specific scripts could not be used, an overall procedure manual provided the basic expectations of how calls and requests should be treated. SEKTDA project team members developed a procedure manual which defined the criteria for each category and requirements for data entry fields. Senture staff included sections which addressed rules for handling calls and call tracking.

#### T5: Make it Easy to Reach the 511 Tourism Operator

**Simplify the Call Menu Option.** Many early users of the 511 Tourism service suggested that the complicated call menu (that was first implemented when the service went live) detracted from their experience and the overall effectiveness of the system. Providing a simplified menu helped alleviate the frustration associated with voice activation systems.

**Make the Tourism Service a Prominent Option.** The more layers the caller had to go through, the less likely he/she was to actually follow through on the call. By making the tourism service a prominent option, callers quickly reach a live person to discuss their travel needs.

#### T6: Effective Marketing

**Hit Users While They Are Driving.** The 511 Tourism Service is often considered an “instant gratification” service. While driving, a person needs tourism information and wants it immediately. Marketing media that informs or reminds him/her of the 511 Tourism Service will be most effective. Roadside signs and billboards are among the best marketing tools.

**Repeat the Same Message.** Have the same message on all marketing media so that the caller associates that one slogan or message with the 511 Tourism Service.

### **3.3 Public-Private Partnership Issues**

This section of lessons learned addresses Public-Private Partnership issues. This section pertains to issues such as: (1) is a private partner is needed, (2) how to choose that partner once the decision has been made, and (3) tips for maintaining a good relationship between the public entity and the private partner.

#### PPP1: When Do You Need a Partner?

**Lack Organizational Capabilities.** Though SEKTDA initially attempted to implement a call center in their location, they quickly realized that they did not have the technical staff needed for a working call center. As a tourist promotion group,

SEKTDA could provide excellent tourism information, but they did not have the technical assets or capabilities of provide that information to the numerous users that would be using the 511 Tourism Service.

**External Assistance.** SEKTDA and the Center for Rural Development quickly realized that the technical skills they needed could not be found in Somerset, Kentucky. Therefore, they needed to find a partner from outside the initial planned (legislated) area.

### PPP2: How Do You Decide on the Right Partner?

**A Single Partner.** SEKTDA knew it needed one partner that would be capable of handling all aspects of the call center operations. Given the complexity of the project and the short time frame for project completion, multiple partners could introduce coordination challenges and possibly add to the cost of the project.

**Partner Location.** The original legislation specified that the call center be located in Somerset, Kentucky. Given that this could not be feasibly accomplished, the next best solution was to locate the call center in Sensure's facility, less than 50 miles from the original location. The proximity of Sensure's operations to SEKTDA and Sensure's location within the service area contributed to its selection as the private sector partner. Close proximity allowed for supervision by SEKTDA and face-to-face relations between SEKTDA and Sensure's upper management.

**Partner Engagement.** Sensure was located in the 511 Premium Service coverage area which gave it more a stake in ensuring the program's success. As Sensure's leadership stated, "we love doing it ... we work here, live here, and this is our area."

**Partner Capabilities.** At bid time, Sensure already had an operating call center. This was evidence of its expertise in and knowledge of the call center industry, reassuring SEKTDA that it was capable of getting the job done in the time allotted.

### PPP3: Ensuring Good Relationship

**Single Point of Contact with Authority to Make Decisions.** Sensure assigned one staff person as the project manager and contact person with SEKTDA. This dedicated staff person was provided with the necessary resources and authority to make project-specific decisions. Providing a partnership structure where there was a direct contact ensured that decisions could be made quickly and issues addressed promptly.

**Flexible Organizational Structure.** SEKTDA's organizational structure was very flexible because it had such a small staff and each staff member wore many different hats (had multiple responsibilities). Sensure also had a flexible organizational structure. This flexibility was especially important for certain aspects of the project, like the deployment of the 511 Tourism Service, where there was a high degree of uncertainty.

**Everyone on the Same Page.** For the 511 Tourism Service project it was critical that all experts be on the same page. SEKTDA's tourism activities fed into the data management and call center activities undertaken by Sensure. Discontinuity or disparity between those activities could have led to important delays in the deployment process. To ensure continuity and consistency, SEKTDA and Sensure had weekly and monthly update meetings.

## Chapter 4

### 511 TOURISM SERVICE USER SURVEY

#### 4.1 Survey Overview

The 511 Tourism Service User Survey was designed to collect different types of information that would be integral to the future of the 511 Tourism Service and to overall tourism in the Southern and Eastern Kentucky region. The survey was intended to serve four functions: (1) to develop an understanding of current utilization of the 511 Tourism Service, (2) gauge user satisfaction with the service, (3) obtain information such as user preferences for expanded or enhanced services, and (4) determine possible impact of the service on travel behavior and tourism. Specifically, the survey provided a means of

- (1) defining the 511 Tourism Service base;
- (2) obtaining guidance for deciding on expansion of informational and/or service offerings;
- (3) determining use and satisfaction levels;
- (4) gauging the extent to which 511 Tourism Service (a) assisted users in their travel planning, (b) influenced the length of their stay in Southern or Eastern Kentucky; and (c) encouraged their tourism activities in Southern or Eastern Kentucky.

The 511 Tourism Service User Survey was administered as a telephone survey by the University of Louisville Urban Studies Institute (USI). USI contacted 824 users of the 511 Tourism Services who volunteered to participate in the survey. All users of the 511 Tourism Service were invited to participate in this survey. Those that volunteered were typically contacted between 3 to 6 weeks after they called the 511 Tourism Service Call Center. The final sample of 600 users represents a 73% response rate. The complete survey questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

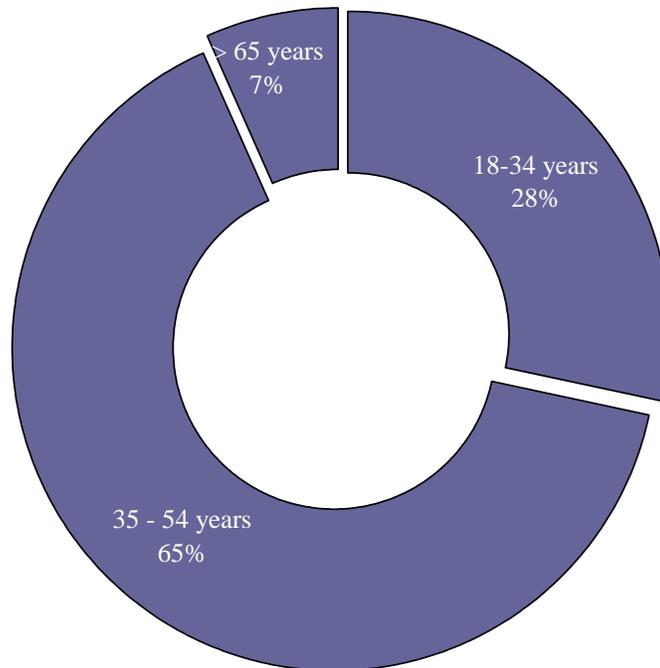
Telephone surveys began in June 2005 and concluded in March 2006. This span of time allowed the research team to obtain responses from individuals who utilized the service during high volume periods (June-October) and lower volume periods (November-March). This ensures that the survey findings will be representative of the service utilization regardless of tourism season. The next section summarizes findings from the 511 Tourism Service User Survey.

## 4.2 Survey Findings

### 4.2.1 Demographic Information

Survey respondents are overwhelmingly residents of Kentucky. Of these, they are primarily from within the 511 Tourism Service area – 91% of those surveyed live within the program’s 42 counties. The age distribution of respondents is summarized in Figure 4.2.1.

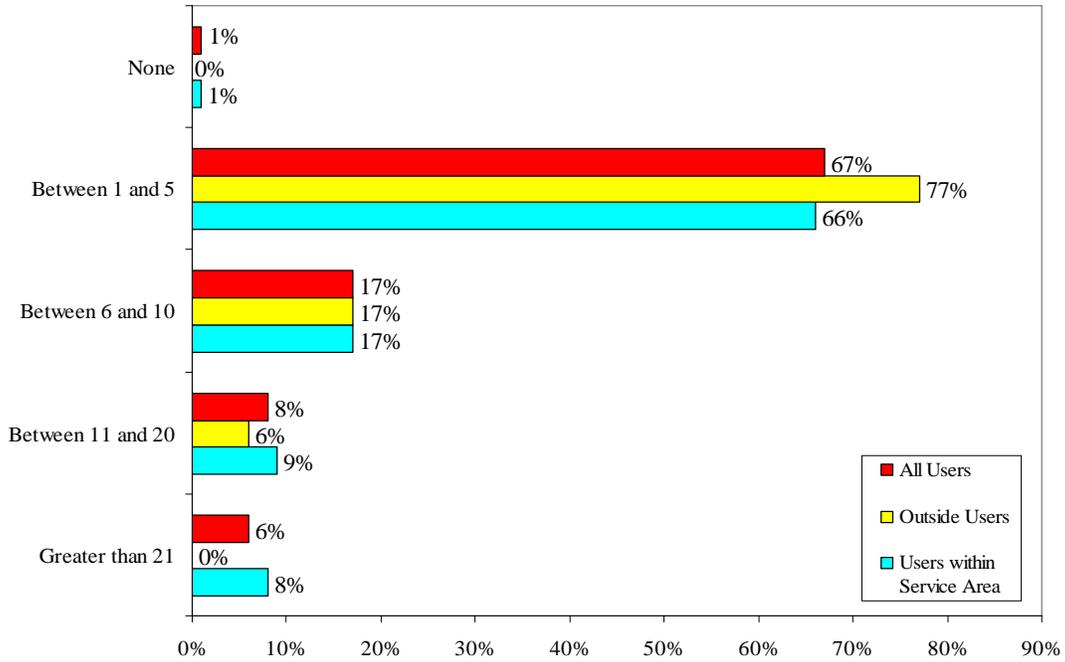
**Figure 4.2.1 Age Distribution of 511 Tourism Information System Survey Respondents**



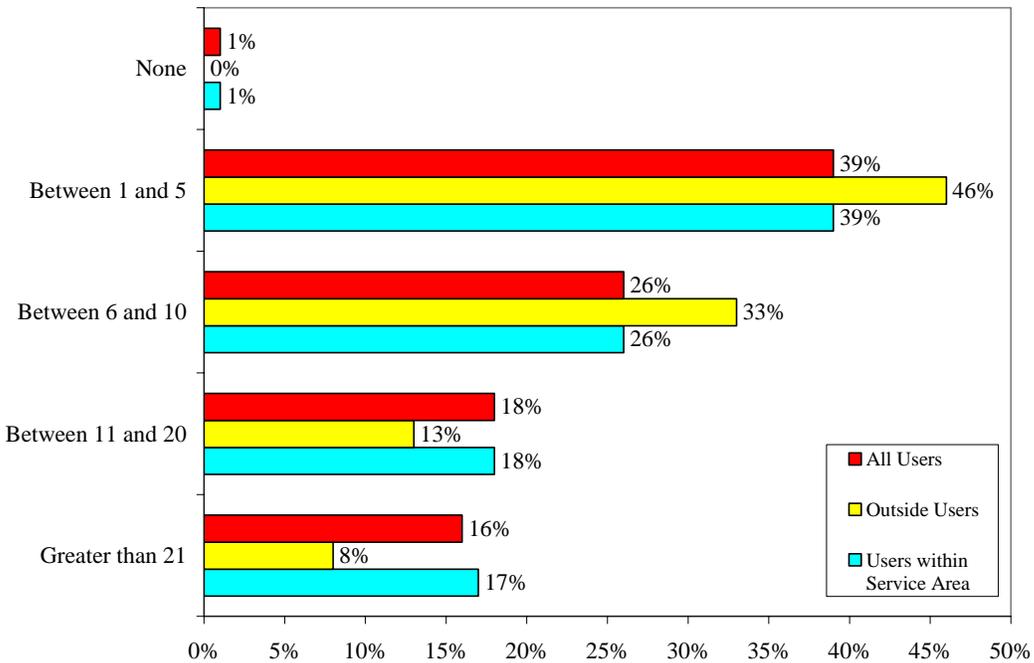
### 4.2.2 Travel Behavior in Southern/Eastern Kentucky

On average, respondents made 7 trips per year to or through Southern and/or Eastern Kentucky for overnight business, tourism, or vacation travel. On these trips, they spent an average of 13 days in the region. Users residing outside of the 511 Tourism Service’s coverage area took an average of 4 trips to or through Southern and Eastern Kentucky and spent an average of 9 days in the region.

**Figure 4.2.2 Travel Behavior To and Through Southern and Eastern Kentucky, Number of Trips**



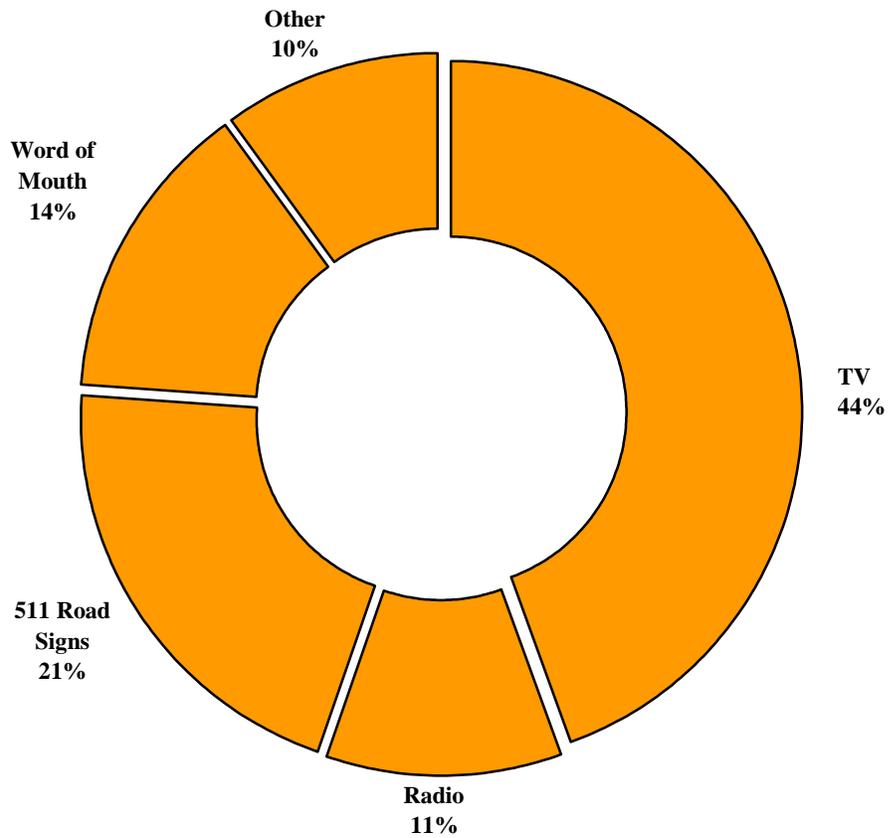
**Figure 4.2.3 Travel Behavior To and Through Southern and Eastern Kentucky, Number of Days**



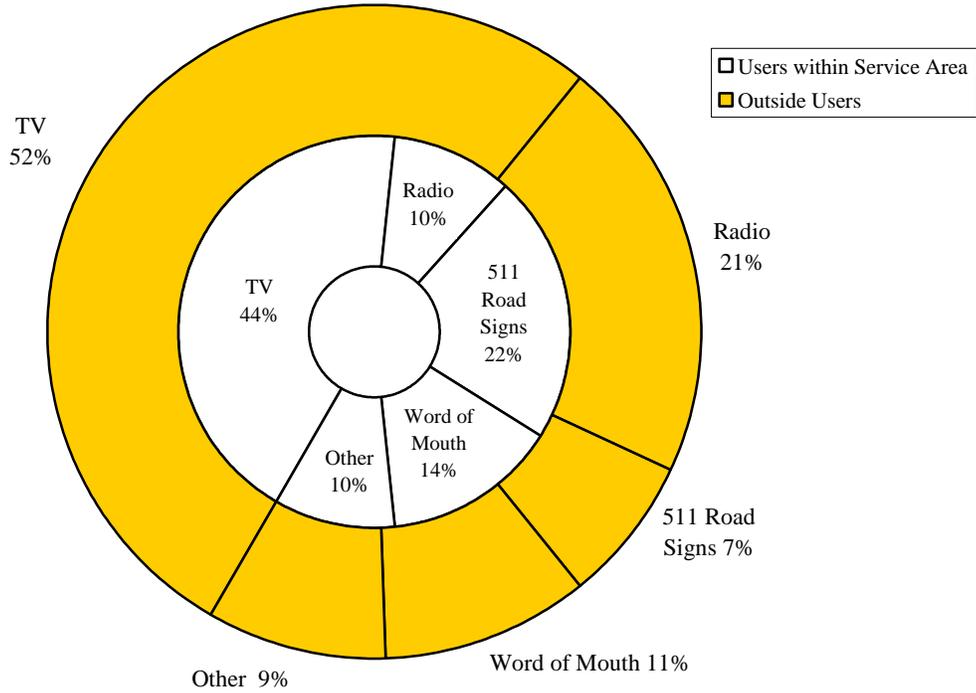
### Access to 511 Tourism Service

How did users of the 511 Tourism Service learn about the program and the information it provides? Figures 4.2.4 and 4.2.5 summarize the survey respondents' use of the different sources of learning and information about the 511 Tourism Service. Overall, television and radio were the most widely utilized sources. A comparison of outside users to those users residing within the service area shows that television and radio were the primary sources of learning and information for both groups. This suggests that if Senture and SEKTDA want to target a wider user audience, beyond residents of Southern and Eastern Kentucky, they should continue to emphasize television and radio advertising.

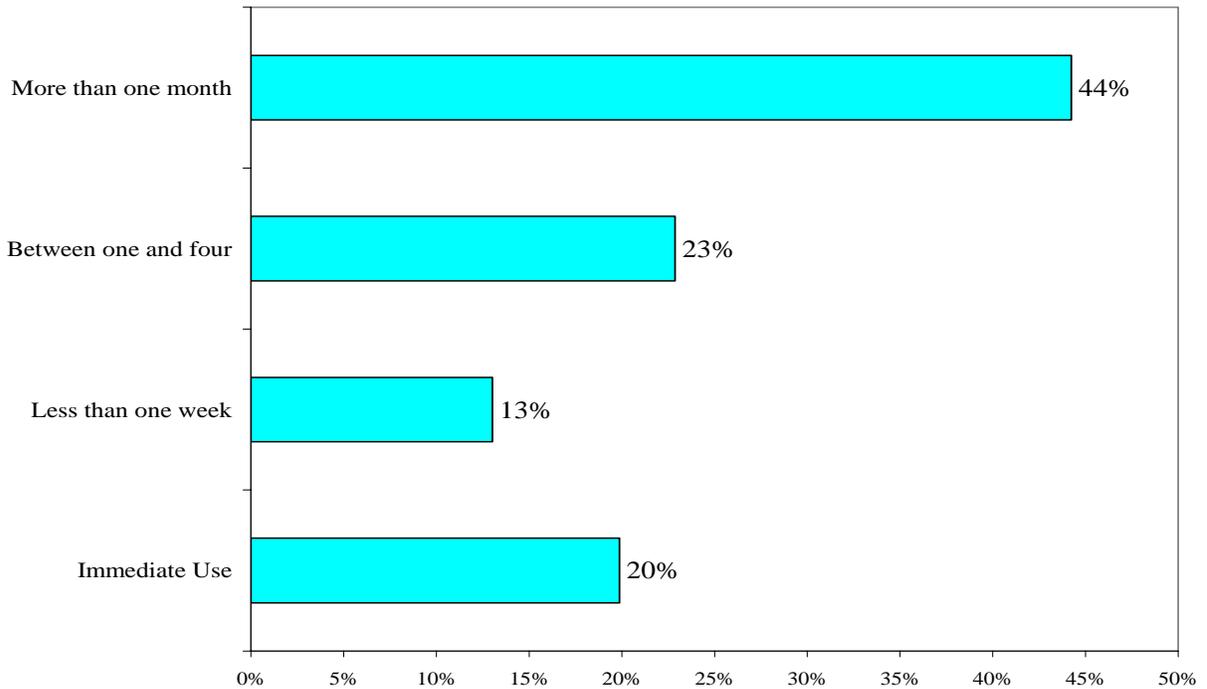
**Figure 4.2.4 Sources of Learning and Information about the 511 Tourism Service**



**Figure 4.2.5 Comparison of Sources of Learning and Information about the 511 Tourism Service Used by Different User Categories**



**Figure 4.2.6 Lag between First Hearing about the 511 Tourism Service and Actual Usage**



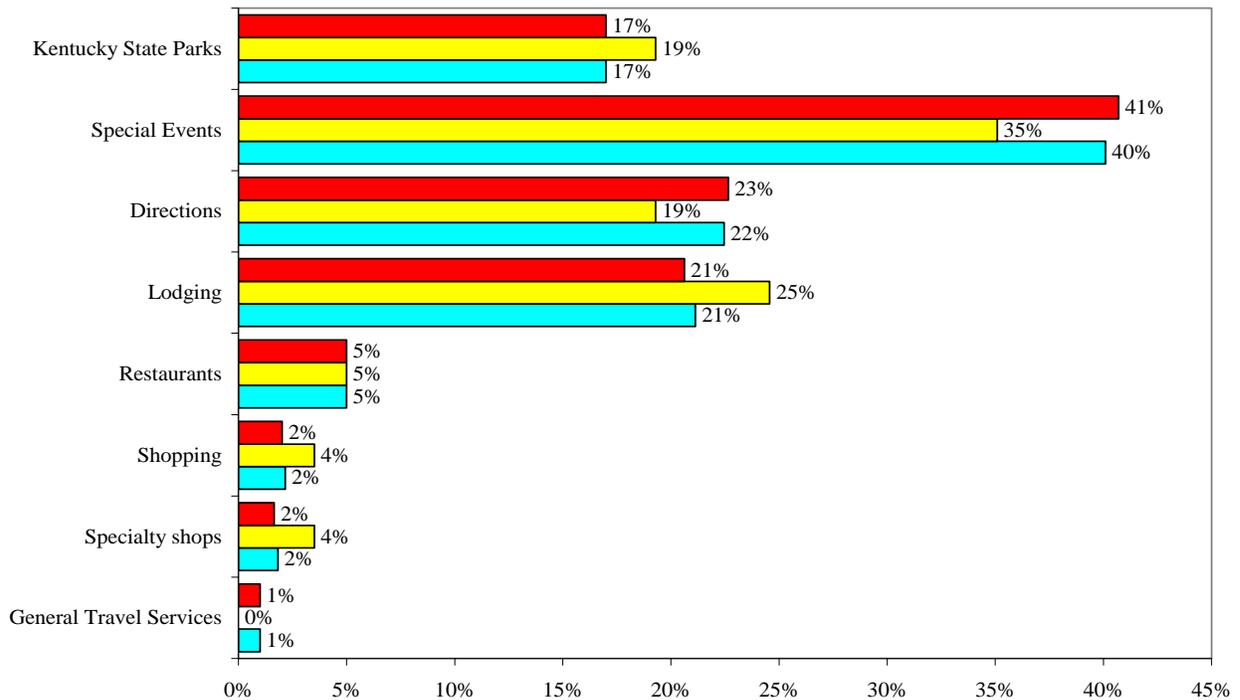
On average, there appears to be a lag between users learning about the 511 Tourism Service and actual use of the service. For 44% of survey respondents, this lag was in excess of one month. Lastly, most users of the 511 Tourism Information Service call from their homes (85%), while the remaining 15% call from work (6%) or from their vehicle (9%).

### 4.2.3 Information Requests

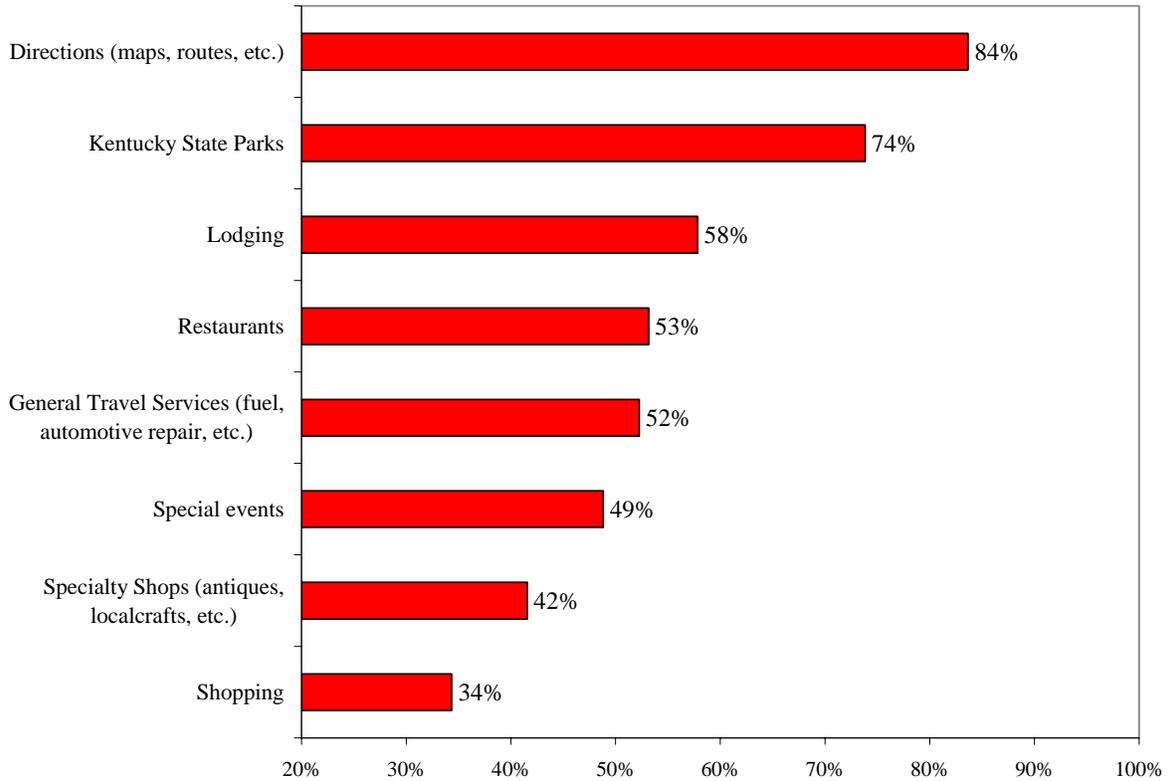
On average, survey respondents utilized the 511 Tourism Service twice. 61% of respondents used the Tourism Service only once. 34% reported using it between 2 and 5 times, 4% between 6 and 10 times, and 1% using the service in excess of 10 times. For outside users, 70% of respondents utilized the Tourism Service only once, with the remaining 30% having used the service between 2 and 5 times.

As evident from Figure 4.2.7, the highest percentage of callers requested information about special events in the 511 Tourism coverage area followed closely by those requesting directions and lodging information. One interesting aspect this chart demonstrates is that there were not significant differences between information requests from resident users inside the service area compared to those residents outside the service area. Clearly, the 511 Tourism Service can provide beneficial information to those interested in exploring their own region, as well as those who may not be quite as familiar with the various events the region has to offer.

**Figure 4.2.7 Comparison of Information Requests by User Categories**



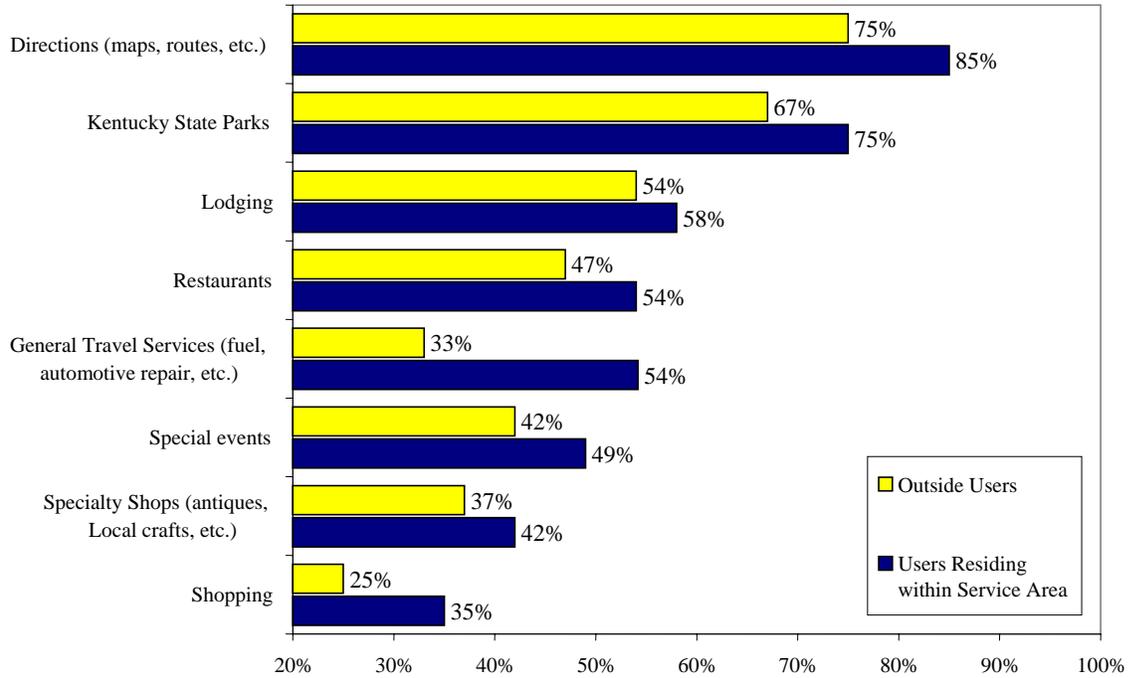
**Figure 4.2.8 Importance of Currently Available Information**



Though only 22% of all users called the 511 Tourism Service for directions, 84% of those same respondents ranked direction information as very important, while only 49% of respondents ranked information access to special events as very important. What these numbers suggest, when compared with those responses from 4.2.7, is that though the user may not call for directional information, it is important that they know the information is available when needed. In addition, while only 17% of users actually called for information concerning Kentucky State Parks, 74% of respondents stated that having information concerning state parks was very important.

Figure 4.2.9 presents the importance of tourism information categories to users residing within and outside the coverage area.

**Figure 4.2.9 Importance of Tourism Information Categories by Users Within/Outside the 511 Tourism Service Area**



#### 4.2.4 Satisfaction with the 511 Tourism Information Service

Evidence from survey respondents suggests that getting to the 511 Tourism Service operator was a somewhat arduous task. Survey respondents did not appear to find it easy to navigate the 511 menu to reach the tourism operators, as evident from only 50% of respondents rating the 511 navigation menu as excellent. The remaining 36% found it to be very good, 7% rated it as good and 2% as fair. However, once respondents reached the 511 Tourism Service operators, their experiences were extremely positive. 100% of survey respondents found the 511 Tourism Service operators to be courteous.

Testimony to the in-depth training used by Senture and SEKTDA and the development of a procedural manual, is evident by the high levels of satisfaction, accuracy, usefulness and helpfulness of provided information as reported by survey respondents. 90% of all survey respondents were very satisfied with the time it took to obtain the information from the 511 Tourism Service operator. 88% of outside users and 91% of local users (residing within the service area) rated the timeliness of information retrieval as very satisfactory. 89% of respondents found the information provided by 511 Tourism Service to be very accurate and 9% found the information to be mostly accurate.

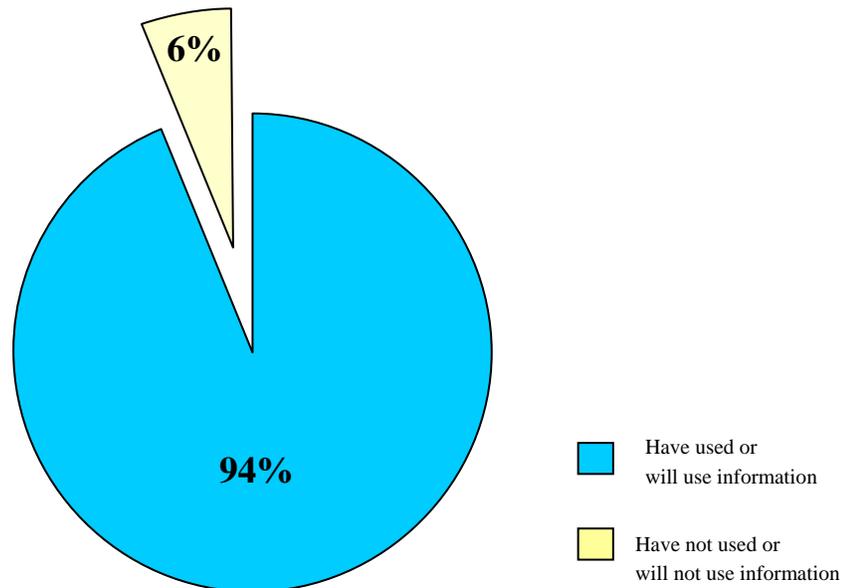
91% of respondents found the information provided by the 511 Tourism Service operators to be very helpful, 7% found the information to be somewhat helpful. 88% of respondents found

the information to be very useful, while 9% states that the information was somewhat useful. Outside users and users residing within the program's service area found the information provided by the 511 Tourism Service to be equally useful (88% of respondents from each category).

99% of survey respondents (outside and local users, similarly) would recommend the 511 Tourism Service to others. In terms of call time, 90% were very satisfied with the time it took to obtain the required tourism information and 7% of survey respondents were somewhat satisfied. The 511 Tourism Service also met the expectations of these respondents; 89% were very satisfied (84% of outside users and 90% of local users were very satisfied) and 9% were somewhat satisfied. Surveyed respondents also expressed high levels of satisfaction with the answers and information that the 511 Tourism Service operators provided during their calls. 94% of respondents stated that they were very satisfied. Outside users expressed greater satisfaction than those users from within the service area, with 95% of those surveyed stating that they were very satisfied and 5% were somewhat satisfied with the information provided. Of those surveyed users residing within the service area, 94% stated that they were very satisfied with the answers and information they received during their call to the 511 Tourism Service.

Survey respondents were also asked whether they had used or would use the information obtained from the 511 tourism operator. As presented in Figure 4.2.10, 94% of respondents stated that they had or would use the information provided currently.

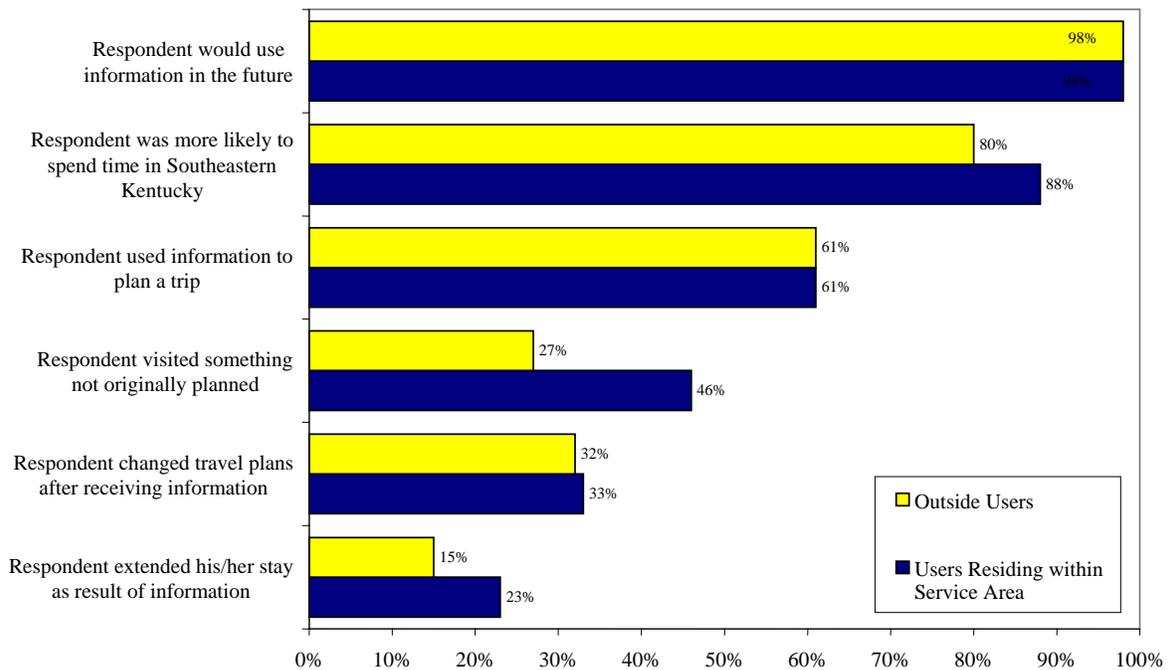
**Figure 4.2.10 Information Usage**



#### 4.2.5 Impact of 511 Tourism Service

A smaller percentage of users from outside Southern and Eastern Kentucky (15%) extended their stay in the Southern and Eastern Kentucky area as a result of their call to the 511 Tourism Service, compared to users that resided in the area (23%). There were no differences between the two user groups with respect to the impact the 511 Tourism Service had on their travel planning.

**Figure 4.2.11 Impact of Tourism Information on Travel Behavior by Users within and Outside the Service Area**



#### 4.2.6 Additional Features

When respondents were asked about the potential of additional features to the 511 Tourism service, 93% of survey respondents stated that they would like to see the service cover additional areas around the state. 87% of respondents would like to be able to call the 511 Tourism service to make lodging reservations, while 84% would like to be able to purchase tickets to local attractions and special events. Lastly, 79% percent of respondents stated that they would use the 511 Tourism service to purchase travel packages in the region. Given the amount of overwhelming support for these additional features, perhaps some of these features could be a mechanism for generating additional revenue for the service.

**Figure 4.2.12 Desired Additional Features of the 511 Tourism Information Service, Percentage of Respondents Supporting Addition of the Feature**

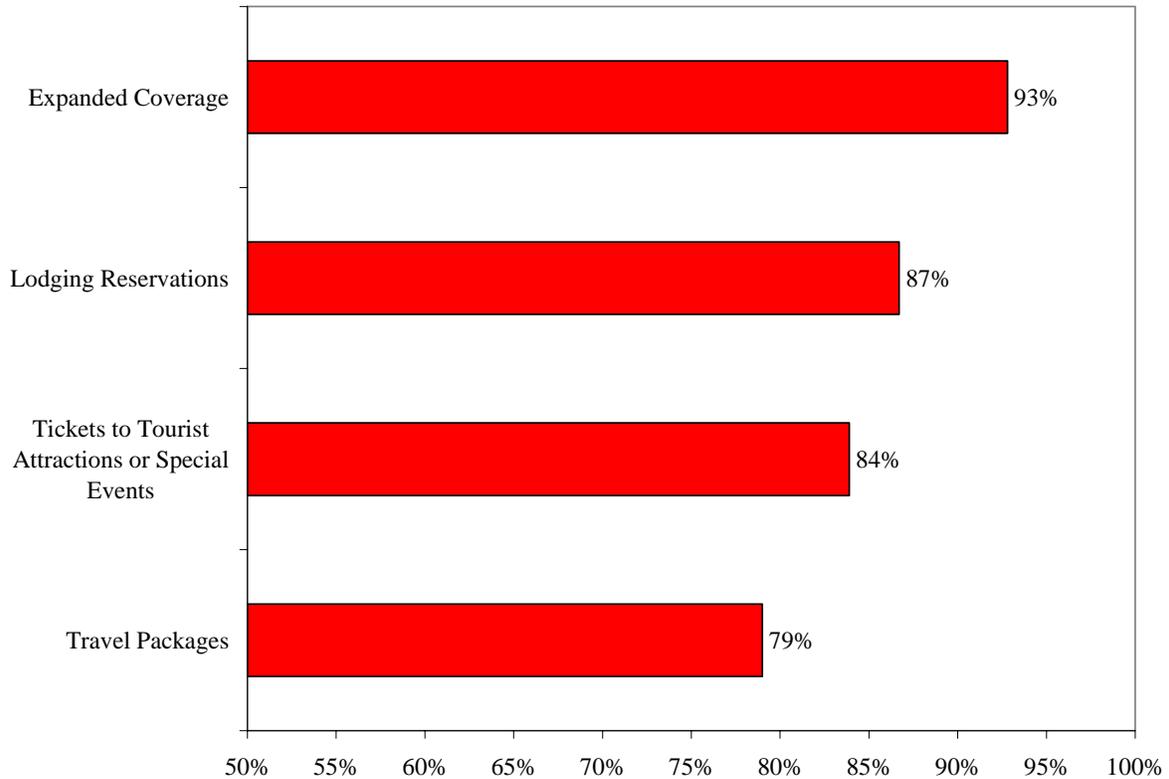
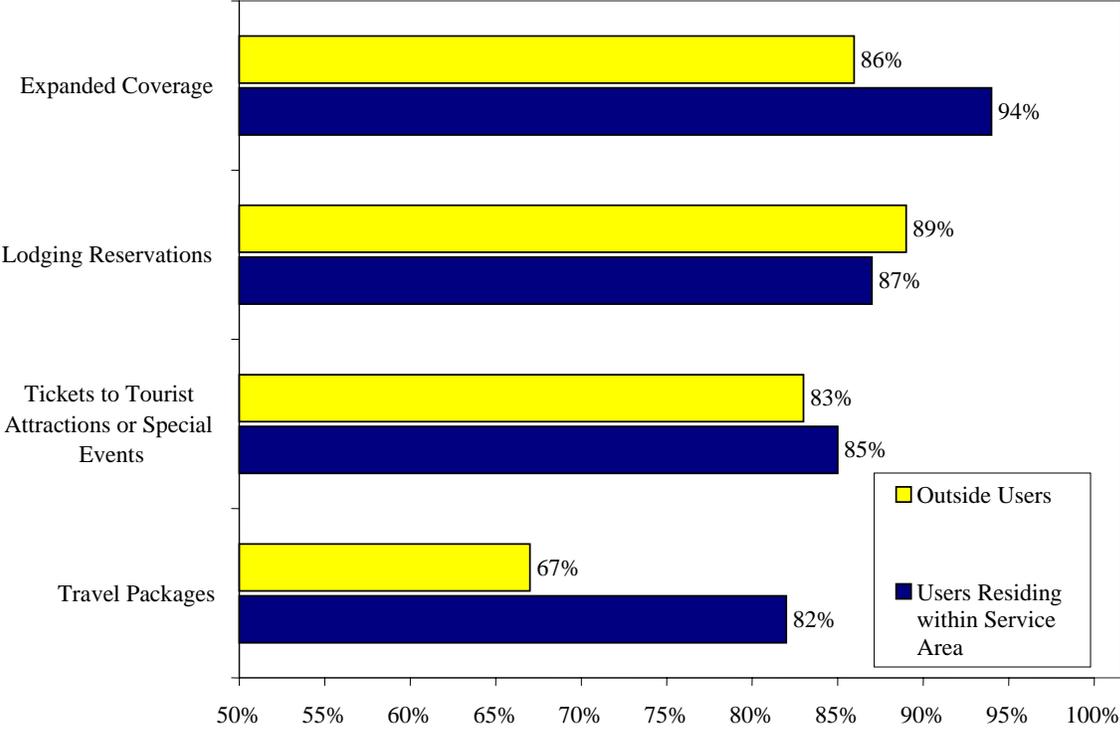


Figure 4.2.13 presents survey responses to questions about additional 511 Tourism Service features, comparing respondents residing inside the service area and those residing outside the service area. There are some differences in how those inside and outside the region view the potential additional features. For example, 67% users from outside the service area responded favorably to the 511 Tourism Service offering travel packages, compared to 82% of respondents residing within the service area responding favorably. In addition, a higher number of respondents within the area (94%) responded favorably to expanding the coverage area versus those residing outside the coverage area (86%).

**Figure 4.2.13 Desired Additional Features of the 511 Tourism Information Service by Users Within and Outside the Service Area, Percentage of Respondents Supporting Addition of the Feature**



## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION

As an early adopter and 511 system leader, Kentucky is in a good position to share the knowledge and expertise it has developed through the Eastern Kentucky Rural Highway Information Project. With only two states currently providing 511 tourism information services, and other states considering implementing a similar premium service package, lessons learned from Kentucky's experience with launching and managing a multi-county tourism information system should be an invaluable asset to other states.

This report began with a discussion of the issues faced by the 511 tourism project team during the implementation, launch, and early operations of the 511 Tourism Service. Based on interviews with key players from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Senture, and SEKTDA, where 22 "lessons learned" (as summarized in Chapter 3) emerged from those discussions. The lessons learned broadly fit into three categories (1) institutional issues, (2) technical issues, and (3) public-private partnership issues, all of which should help other public entities avoid some implementation problems that could potentially lead to delays and cost increases.

There were many critical factors that lead to the successful implementation of the Southern and Eastern Kentucky 511 Tourism Service. However, some lessons learned were more critical to the success of the implementation of the program and continued operations. There were three lessons learned that particularly seemed critical to the successful launch of the program; (1) T1: Collecting the Data; (2) PPP1: When Do You Need a Partner? and (3) PPP3: How Do You Decide on the Right Partner? After the program was launched, again, there were many lessons learned during the early operations stage of the 511 Tourism Service. Those lessons that were particularly critical to the continuing success of the program were (1) T2: Ensuring Quality Data, (2) T3: Operator Training, and (3) T6: Effective Marketing.

This study also conducted a user survey, administered to 600 users. Survey questions ranged from satisfaction with the 511 Tourism Service and tourism operators in regards to the information provided to more open-ended questions about services users would like to see offered in the future. Several questions were asked concerning how the survey respondent learned about the 511 Tourism Service, in an effort to provide additional information to SEKTDA for potential use in future marketing campaigns. Of those users surveyed, over half (55%) stated that they learned about the 511 Tourism Service from television and radio ads. For survey users residing outside the service area, this number was significantly higher, with 73% of survey respondents stating that they learned about the 511 Tourism Service from television ads. Clearly, to reach consumers residing outside the coverage area, radio and television advertising is an effective tool.

We were also interested in levels of satisfaction with the 511 Tourism Service. The survey results suggested that user satisfaction with the 511 Tourism Service was extremely high, with 94% of users surveyed stating they were very satisfied with the answers and information they

received from the 511 Tourism Service operator. 100% of respondents stated that the operator they spoke with was courteous. Overall, survey respondents were highly satisfied with the level of service they received from the Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Service.

Another set of interesting findings concerned importance levels users placed on the various types of information available through the 511 Tourism Service. Survey respondents stated that access to directions as a very important feature (84%), even though only 22% of those same respondents actually called for directions. In addition, only 17% of surveyed users actually called for information about Kentucky State Parks, though 74% of those same respondents stated that having access to information about Kentucky State Parks was very important.

Perhaps one clear indication of the success of the 511 Tourism Service is the number of respondents who stated that they would like to see the service cover additional areas in the state. 93% of survey respondents stated that they would like to see the service expanded. A slightly lower number of respondents (87%) stated that they would like to be able to call the 511 Tourism Service to make lodging reservations, while 84% stated that they would like to be able to purchase tickets to local attractions and events. Though additional research would be necessary to determine whether offering these types of services could generate additional revenues, there certainly were high levels of support for expanding current 511 Tourism Service offerings.

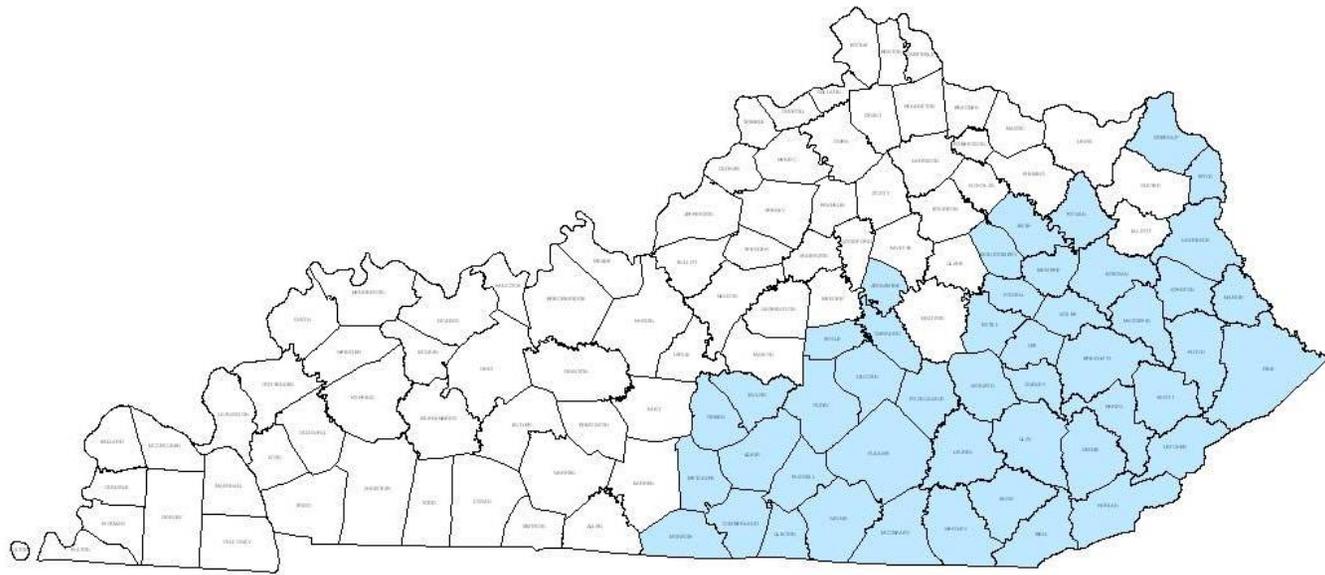
**Appendix A:**

**511 TOURISM SERVICE COVERAGE AREA**

**A.1 List of Counties (and City of Berea)**

JACKSON	LAUREL	ROCKCASTLE	WHITLEY
CLINTON	MCCREARY	PULASKI	RUSSELL
WAYNE	GARRARD	LINCOLN	CASEY
JESSAMINE	FLOYD	JOHNSON	LAWRENCE
MARTIN	PIKE	BELL	HARLAN
KNOX	CLAY	KNOTT	LESLIE
LETCHER	PERRY	BREATHITT	ESTILL
LEE	MAGOFFIN	MENIFEE	MORGAN
OWSLEY	BATH	ROWAN	WOLFE
POWELL	ADAIR	CUMBERLAND	GREEN
METCALFE	MONROE	TAYLOR	BOYD
BOYLE	GREENUP	CITY OF BEREA	

## A.2 Map of Coverage Area



 Counties covered by the 511 Tourism Service

## Appendix B

### SURVEY USER INSTRUMENT

1. A few weeks ago, you volunteered to do a short survey about the 511 tourism information service. I want to thank you for your willingness to participate. Today we would like you to recall the quality of information and the service you received so that we may make improvements to the 511 service. There are no personal risks or benefits to you being in this study. Taking part is up to you. You don't have to answer questions you don't want to, and you are free to end the interview at any time. The interview takes only 5 minutes. All information you give us will be confidential. If you have any questions about this survey, I will provide a telephone number for you to call to get more information. Would you be willing to do this interview now?

1. YES  
 2. YES, BUT CALL BACK AT ANOTHER TIME  
 3. NO, REFUSE OR INELIGIBLE

2. Are you at least 18 years old? (If no, end the interview)

1. YES (GO TO QUESTION 3)  
 2. NO  
 3. NO ANSWER/REFUSED

3. How old are you? (Mark appropriate range?)

1. 18-34  
 2. 35-64  
 3. 65 or older  
 4. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

4. Do you live in Kentucky?

1. YES (GO TO QUESTION 6)  
 2. NO  
 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

5. In which state do you live?

SKIP TO QUESTION 7

6. In which county do you live?  
(Only asked for those that live in Kentucky)

7. Approximately how many times per year do you go to or  
through Southern and/or Eastern Kentucky for tourism or  
vacation travel?

|\_\_|\_\_|

8. Approximately how many days per year do you go to or  
through Southern and/or Eastern Kentucky for tourism or  
vacation travel?

|\_\_|\_\_|

9. Where did you learn that dialing 511 would give you tourism  
information?

- |\_\_| 1. TV
- |\_\_| 2. Radio
- |\_\_| 3. Website (GO TO QUESTION 10)
- |\_\_| 4. 511 road signs
- |\_\_| 5. Trying out the Tourism option on the 511 Main Menu
- |\_\_| 6. Word of mouth
- |\_\_| 7. Other (GO TO QUESTION 11)
- |\_\_| 8. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

SKIP TO QUESTION 12

10. What website is that?

SKIP TO QUESTION 12

11. What other is that?

12. How long was it between first hearing about the 511  
Tourism Information service and first using the service?

- |\_\_| 1. Same day
- |\_\_| 2. Less than one week
- |\_\_| 3. Between one and four weeks
- |\_\_| 4. More than one month
- |\_\_| 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

13. Approximately how many times have you utilized  
the Tourism Information Service?

|\_\_|\_\_|\_\_|

14. From what type of location do you call 511 most often?

- 1. Home
- 2. Work
- 3. Vehicle
- 4. Other (GO TO QUESTION 15)
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

SKIP TO QUESTION 16

15. What other location is that?

16. Now I would like for you to think back to when you were asked whether you would participate in this survey. The following questions pertain to that specific call. Where were you traveling from (CITY, COUNTY, STATE IF FAR AWAY) when you used the 511 Tourism Information Service?

17. Where were you traveling to (CITY, COUNTY, STATE IF FAR AWAY) When you used the 511 Tourism Information Service?

18. What type of information were you looking for when you called the 511 Tourism Information service?

- 1. Special events
- 2. Directions (maps, routes)
- 3. Lodging (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts)
- 4. Restaurants
- 5. Kentucky State Parks information
- 6. Shopping
- 7. Specialty shops (antiques, etc.)
- 8. Restroom/ Rest Area locations
- 9. General travel services (fuel, automotive repair, etc.)
- 10. Just wanted additional information about this service
- 11. Other (GO TO QUESTION 19)

SKIP TO QUESTION 20

19. What other information was that?

20. How accurately would you rate the information you received? Would you say it was . . .

- 1. Very Accurate
- 2. Mostly Accurate
- 3. Not very accurate
- 4. Not at all Accurate
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

21. How helpful was the information you received from the service?  
Would you say it was . . .

- 1. Very helpful
- 2. Somewhat Helpful
- 3. Not very helpful
- 4. Not at all helpful
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

22. How useful was the information you received?  
Would you say it was . . .

- 1. Very useful
- 2. Somewhat useful
- 3. Not very useful
- 4. Not at all useful
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

SKIP TO QUESTION 24

23. How could this information be made better?

24. Did you, or will you, use the information you  
obtained from the 511 Tourism Information Service to  
plan a trip to Southern and/or Eastern Kentucky?

- 1. Have used the information
- 2. Have not but will use the information
- 3. Have not and will not use the information
- 4. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

25. Would you use the 511 Tourism Services in the future  
to help plan your travel?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. NOT SURE
- 4. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

26. As a result of your call to the 511 Tourism Information Service,  
did you extend your stay in the Southern/Eastern Kentucky area?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

27. As a result of your call, did you visit something you had not planned on visiting?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

28. As a result of your call, did you change your travel plans due to the information obtained through the 511 system?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

29. Were you, or are you, more likely to spend time in the Southern/Eastern Kentucky area as a result of the information provided through the service?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

30. How would you rate your experience in navigating the 511 menu to reach the tourism operator?  
Would you say . . .

- 1. Excellent
- 2. Very Good
- 3. Good
- 4. Fair
- 5. Poor
- 6. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

31. How satisfied were you with the answers and information you received from the 511 Tourism Service operator? Were you . . .

- 1. Very satisfied
- 2. Somewhat satisfied
- 3. Not very satisfied
- 4. Not at all satisfied
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

32. How satisfied were you with the time it took to receive the requested information? Were you . . .

- 1. Very satisfied
- 2. Somewhat satisfied
- 3. Not very satisfied
- 4. Not at all satisfied
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

33. How well did the service meet your expectations? Were you . . .

- 1. Very satisfied
- 2. Somewhat satisfied
- 3. Not very satisfied
- 4. Not at all satisfied
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

34. Was the Tourism Information operator you talked to courteous?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

35. Have you, or would you, recommended the 511 Tourism Information service to a friend?

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

36. I'm going to read you a list of additional features which could become available as part of the 511 Tourism Information. As I read them please tell me which you might like to use. Expanded coverage area beyond Southern and Eastern Kentucky.

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

37. Ability to buy tickets to tourist attractions and special events through the 511 Tourism Information service.

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

38. Ability to make lodging reservations through the 511  
Tourism Information service.

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

39. Ability to arrange travel packages (packages to  
include, for example, golf, lodging, boating and other  
tourist activities)

- 1. YES
- 2. NO
- 3. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

40. What other features, if any, would you be interested  
in having as part of the 511 Tourism Information  
service?

41. How important to you are each of the following  
tourism information categories? The first is --  
Special events

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

42. Directions (maps, routes)

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

43. Lodging (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts)

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

44. Restaurants

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

45. Kentucky State Parks information

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

46. Shopping

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

47. Specialty shops (antiques, local crafts, etc.)

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

48. General travel services (fuel, automotive repair, etc.)

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Not very important
- 4. Not at all important
- 5. REFUSED/NO ANSWER

## Appendix C

### COST ESTIMATE DATA

Kentucky Fiscal Year	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006*	Total Cost
<b>Component</b>					
511 Tourism Signs (Est.)		\$140,000			\$140,000
511 Tourism Local Evaluation		\$65,000	\$20,000		\$85,000
KYTC Technical Assistance	\$32,500	\$42,500			\$75,000
ITS Project Architecture				\$20,000	\$20,000
24 Dedicated IVR outbound Ports			\$36,000		\$36,000
3 Desktop PCs and Printer	\$5,760				\$5,760
<b>Total Implementation Cost</b>	<b>\$38,260</b>	<b>\$247,500</b>	<b>\$56,000</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$361,760</b>
<b>Operations (Annual Cost)</b>					
8xx Telephone Service (Est.)		\$600	\$3,000	\$1300**	\$3,600
Information Call Center		\$247,152	\$239,389	\$44,494	\$531,034
Call Center Office Space	\$259	\$98,557	\$99,261	\$19,372	\$217,448
Staffing	\$41,838	\$813,350	\$817,455	\$359,693	\$2,032,335
511 Marketing and Outreach		\$81,775	\$142,428	\$136,954	\$361,157
511 Web Site and GIS Integration		\$428,454	\$426,454	\$129,927	\$984,835
SEKTDA Training and Travel		\$1,651	\$2,167	\$2,687	\$6,504
<b>Total Operations Cost</b>	<b>\$42,096</b>	<b>\$1,671,538</b>	<b>\$1,730,152</b>	<b>\$693,126</b>	<b>\$4,136,913</b>

## Appendix D

### INFORMATIONAL, MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

# 511 Tourism Information Call Center

## A unique travel and tourism promotion service for Southern and Eastern Kentucky

Plan travel routes or decide what to see and where to stay with friendly service representatives. Call **5-1-1** and start exploring the awesome adventure awaiting you in Southern and Eastern Kentucky.



Kentucky's 511 program is a traffic, travel and weather information service. Callers in Kentucky may dial **5-1-1** from any phone to receive statewide automated traffic and weather, or live regional travel and tourism related information.

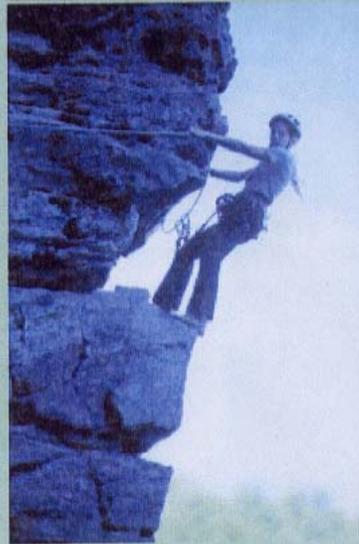
The 511 Tourism Information Call Center hours are 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern Time daily. Individuals calling from out of state may dial 1-877-TOUR-SEKY.

The 511 Tourism Information Call Center is a service of the Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association. This project is made possible through funding obtained by Congressman Hal Rogers and through a partnership with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

Southern and Eastern Kentucky Tourism Development Association seeks to promote, expand, develop and market the existing and potential tourism industry throughout Southern and Eastern Kentucky in an effort to contribute to the economic and cultural growth of the region.



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For statewide travel information  
call 1-800-225-8747  
[www.kytourism.com](http://www.kytourism.com)  
[www.511.ky.gov](http://www.511.ky.gov)

# Majestic Beauty Awaits in Southern & Eastern Kentucky

**5-1-1** Tourism Information Call Center Representatives are available to help you plan your visit to Southern and Eastern Kentucky!



Rushing waters, cool streams, scenic mountains and majestic beauty are awaiting you in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. With lush forests, wildflowers, carpeted mountains, waterfalls, winding country roads, scenic vistas, herds of elk and more colors than Monet, enjoy the best that nature has to offer in this region. It's a time for enjoying family and friends, sitting down together and eating a southern cooked meal or just doing nothing at all. For a soothing change in pace, leisurely conversations and being able to benefit from hearty laughter - visit unforgettable Southern and Eastern Kentucky.



- 17 State Parks and 2 National Parks
- Hundreds of Unique Geologic Formations
- Lakes, River and Streams
- Whitewater rafting
- World class fishing, golf, and rock climbing
- Trails - Hiking, Biking, Horseback Riding, ATV and Wildlife Viewing
- Historic Civil War, Pioneer, Coal and Railroad Sites
- Three National Scenic Byways
- Music Venues
- Festivals and Events
- Arts and Crafts

To obtain information about these and much more, simply dial 5-1-1 in-state and select the "Tourism" option to be transferred to an operator who will help you plan your exciting adventure. Out-of-state callers may dial 1-877-TOURSEKY (868-7735) to plan your Southern and Eastern Kentucky vacation. Operators are available 6 am-Midnight ET.

511 is a nationwide number assigned by the FCC to the transportation community to enable consumers to access travel information services.



[www.tourseky.com](http://www.tourseky.com)

start your outing  
WITH A TRIP TO THE PHONE



- DIAL 5-1-1
- SELECT THE "TOURISM" OPTION
- SPEAK TO A TRAINED TOURISM EXPERT ABOUT LODGING, DINING, ATTRACTIONS, EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

**Real People, Real Answers**



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